



FEMA
National Advisory Council

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MEMORANDUM FOR: W. Craig Fugate
Administrator, FEMA

FROM: James G. Featherstone
Chairman, National Advisory Council

SUBJECT: Recommendations on the National Disaster Housing Task Force
Practitioner's Guide

The purpose of this memorandum is to convey the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Advisory Council's (NAC) feedback on the National Disaster Housing Task Force (NDHTF) Practitioner's Guide (PG).

On Thursday, December 16, 2010, the Council convened a public teleconference. During this call, the NAC's Response and Recovery Subcommittee provided the following recommendations on the NDHTF's PG. The full Council reached consensus to forward these recommendations to the Administrator.

Background

Limited progress has been made in the past five years, post-Katrina, to solve the problem of post-disaster housing recovery in this country. The PG is FEMA's attempt to make significant progress to solve that problem. The PG must be a useful tool that guides practitioners—Federal, State and local stakeholders—through the complexities of post-disaster housing recovery. Any tool useful to practitioners must be “operational” because post-disaster housing recovery is a disaster “operation.”

Disaster operations are complex and challenging and, as such, a common understanding of the objectives is necessary. Characteristics of Disaster Operations include convening at the time of a disaster, creation of a huge demand for information, a requirement of a new task for which no agency may have responsibility, implementation by agencies unfamiliar with its complexities, requirements for improvised procedures for changing conditions, and requirement of new agencies that did not exist before.

It is axiomatic that success in disaster operations requires planning. Plans to conduct operations must have several essential components which include:

1. List of specific activities or tasks that achieve operational objectives.
2. Step-by-step process with these specific activities and with goals and milestones.
3. Assigned agencies for each step with a description of their roles and responsibilities.

4. Essential elements of information (i.e., critical data) for strategic planning and daily operations.

Disaster operations involving Federal, State and local levels of government create an enormous demand for effective coordination. A useful PG must describe a NIMS compliant structure that brings personnel from a wide variety of agencies, entities and government levels into a single organization to provide logistical and information management support and “unity of effort.”

Recommendations:

The NAC recommends that the National Disaster Housing Task Force:

1. Revise the PG to provide a comprehensive operational, self-contained and user-friendly guide for its intended audience.
2. In order to obtain full operational support from the PG, add necessary operational detail to the PG from the NDHTF Concept of Operations (CONOPS), FEMA National Disaster Housing Strategy, and National Disaster Housing Recovery Database to:
 - Identify NIMS compliant command structure for post disaster housing operations;
 - Establish roles and responsibilities, and describe critical tasks for specific federal agencies;
 - Incorporate “unity of effort” for all levels of government and others operating within a defined structure;
 - Foster development of a single location where all participants operate under NIMS compliant structure to implement disaster housing recovery operations and solve problems based on shared objectives and planning; and
 - Describe the most efficient and effective federal housing programs that may be available as part of the post disaster housing menu of options. Data and descriptions that should be included in the Program Database are as follows:
 - i. Program Capacity—Dollar value of funding and timing
 - ii. Target audiences—Description of eligible recipients
 - iii. Availability—Timing and duration of program availability
3. The problem of post-disaster interim housing lends itself to a national solution and therefore FEMA and HUD must develop the national solution. The PG should reflect that approach and ensure that the PG describes in detail the pre-event planning role of each federal agency to:
 - Identify suitable interim housing designs for a range of affected communities, including rural, suburban and urban;
 - Approve interim housing manufacturers with the capacity to provide units in the numbers that will be required following a disaster; and
 - Articulate the capacity of each federal agency to build interim housing for a range of affected communities including rural, suburban and urban.
4. The PG relies in large part on the creation, development, and operation of State Led Disaster Housing Task Forces (SLDHTFs). The PG must describe which federal agency has the responsibility to foster the creation of SLDHTFs and ensure their viability and

successful operation and describe how the responsible federal agency will support the SLDHTF once created.

5. Ensure consistency between the PG and the NRF as each relates to issues of “unity of effort.”

Again, the Council appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the NDHTF’s Practitioner’s Guide.