



Individual Assistance Symposium

After-Action Report

June 2022



FEMA

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Executive Summary

On May 19th, 2022, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Individual Assistance (IA) Division, Office of Regional Field Coordination (ORFC), coordinated and hosted an IA Symposium for state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and FEMA personnel. The IA Division includes a range of programs and functions that FEMA implements during each stage of the recovery life cycle and impact regional, SLTT, and NGO partners. The IA symposium sought to engage FEMA and its IA stakeholders in topics identified to be important to the IA community.

This symposium's goal was to provide attendees the platform to collaborate and learn so that there is a shared understanding of FEMA's capability to respond to and recover from disasters. FEMA Recovery leadership, IA leadership, and state IA partners provided presentations. Due to COVID-19, the symposium was held virtually using the GoToWebinar platform.

Symposium Presenters

The Office of Response and Recovery (ORR), IA Division, invited multiple participants to discuss the topics identified by the IA community. Those participants are listed below:

- Traci Brasher, Acting Division Director, Individual Assistance Division, Office of Response and Recovery, FEMA
- John Carleton, Individual Assistance Acting Senior Advisor, Headquarters, Office of Response and Recovery, FEMA
- Maia Davis, Lead Emergency Management Specialist, Declarations Section, Headquarters, Office of Response and Recovery, FEMA
- Amit Patel, Emergency Management Specialist, Preliminary Damage Assessment Unit, Recovery Directorate, FEMA
- Jarrett McLane, Emergency Management Specialist, Preliminary Damage Assessment Unit, Recovery Directorate, FEMA
- Malcolm Hardy, Program Specialist/Individual Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment Lead, Recovery Division, Region 2, FEMA
- Blair McDonald, Acting Deputy Division Director, Individual Assistance Division, Office of Response and Recovery, FEMA

Individual Assistance Symposium: Topic Review

1. Individual Assistance Acting Division Director Welcome Remarks

The third IA Virtual Symposium hosted by the FEMA IA Division centered on two topics that have significant impacts on FEMA's mission of supporting people before, during, and after a disaster. The first session of the May IA Symposium focused on IA disaster declaration factors. The Acting Division Director discussed that FEMA uses declaration factors to determine whether to include individual assistance in a major disaster declaration. IA disaster declaration factors that FEMA included in this symposium include state and local government's fiscal capacity, available state and local program resources, private sector and non-governmental organization capacity, the extent of uninsured households, and impact on community infrastructure.

The second session centered on Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA). PDAs are conducted to help federal and SLTT partners determine the magnitude of damage and the impact of disasters. The Acting Division Director added that PDAs assist with determining if the effective level of response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments and if federal assistance is necessary.

The Acting Division Director concluded her welcome remarks by emphasizing IA's commitment to furthering FEMA's mission. She added, "Our job as your leadership team is to always look for ways to help improve [the] speed, accuracy, and effectiveness of the variety of assistance types that we provide at the SLTT and federal level. We will continue to do so."

2. IA Declaration Factors

When a disaster declaration occurs, FEMA uses various methods and tools to evaluate whether a major disaster declaration should include IA. One of the methods is to assess six factors that pertain to the disaster area and the impacts of the disaster.

2.1. IA Declaration Factors

Six current FEMA IA declaration factors are used to determine if IA is necessary in a major disaster declaration. FEMA published these factors in 2019, and they replaced the previous factors that correlated to the Federal Regulations, which identified the average cost of IA per state. The six factors are:

- State Fiscal Capacity and Resource Availability
- Uninsured Home and Personal Property Loss
- Disaster Impacted Population Profile
- Impact to Community Infrastructure
- Casualties
- Disaster Related Unemployment

FEMA categorized the six current factors into two categories—principal and additional. The first two factors, State Fiscal Capacity and Resource Availability and Uninsured Home and Personal Property Loss, are the only two principal factors. The factors are based on Individuals and Households Program (IHP) Assistance, and they are used to develop the Cost-to-Capacity ratio.

The additional factors support and influence the recommendation focused on the delivery of the Community Service Programs. Community Service Programs include Disaster Case Management, the Crisis Counseling Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and Disaster Legal Services.

2.1.1. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - STATE FISCAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

The State Fiscal Capacity and Resource Availability factor pertains to gathering information regarding available resources at the SLTT levels through the PDA process and non-governmental organizations (i.e., the American Red Cross and Salvation Army). This factor is two-fold. The first part of the factor pertains to state fiscal capacity. This is where FEMA evaluates the availability of state resources and circumstances that contribute to the absence of sufficient resources using the Bureau of Economic Analysis. This data source provides information on the total taxable resources and the gross domestic product.

FEMA gathers information for the second part of the factor, resource availability, through SLTT partners. This consists of understanding what other available resources FEMA can use to support the recovery of the major disaster declaration.

An indicator that the major disaster declaration should include IA is if the gathered information indicates that the SLTT, non-governmental, and private sector resources may offset the need for or reveal an increased need for supplemental Federal assistance.

2.1.2. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - UNINSURED HOME AND PERSONAL PROPERTY LOSSES

FEMA gathers information on uninsured home and personal property losses through the PDA process and PDA workbook. This factor includes the estimated cost of assistance to support individuals and families in response to the disaster. An indicator that supplemental federal assistance may be needed is if there are high concentrations of damage to homes and personal property.

2.1.3. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - DISASTER IMPACTED POPULATION PROFILE

For the Disaster Impacted Population Profile, FEMA will consider the demographics of a disaster impacted population that may identify additional needs that require a more robust community response and delay a community's ability to recover from a disaster. Using the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau data, in conjunction with the PDA process, FEMA can gather the most up-to-date and accurate information about the affected area at a local level.

Common elements that FEMA collects for demographic data include:

- Income status,
- Elderly population,
- Disabled population,
- English Proficiency, and
- Prevalence of existing government programs (i.e., Supplemental Food Nutrition Program and Social Security).

Demographic data that shows disaster-affected communities have additional needs above state or national averages may indicate an increased need for supplemental federal assistance.

2.1.4. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - IMPACT TO COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

FEMA uses the PDA process and the State and Regional Assessment to understand the disruptions to lifesaving, life-sustaining, and essential community services that have impacted the individuals and families within the affected area. Additionally, FEMA will consider disruptions to utilities or infrastructure that may disproportionately impact populations with additional needs. This information

is part of the Impact to Community Infrastructure factor and depending on how long the disruptions last, it may indicate a need for IA.

2.1.5. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - CASUALTIES

Using the State Assessment and the PDA process, FEMA will aggregate information on the number of missing, injured, and deceased individuals following a disaster. FEMA will consider the number of casualties, identified needs to support family members, and expenses associated with casualties when determining if FEMA includes IA in the disaster declaration.

2.1.6. IA DECLARATION FACTORS - DISASTER RELATED UNEMPLOYMENT

Disaster Related Unemployment refers to the survivors who lost work or became unemployed due to a disaster and do not qualify for standard unemployment insurance benefits. Using the State and Regional Assessment, FEMA will look at other assistance types that individuals may need to support disaster unemployment assistance. If the number of disaster survivors who became unemployed due to a disaster and do not qualify for standard unemployment assistance increases, it may indicate a need for federal assistance.

2.2. IA Declaration Review Template

The IA Declaration Review Template is the document that the disaster-affected region completes when an SLTT entity provides information and requests federal assistance. The template contains a breakdown of the six factors and additional details to support each factor.

The template also includes a color-based matrix that FEMA uses to develop the cost-to-capacity ratio.

2.2.1. INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE EVALUATION FACTORS

The IA Declaration Review Template matrix is based upon historical data that FEMA has collected over several years. It includes all disaster requests and where the cost of the IHP program fell within the state resources. FEMA uses the information gathered regarding the total taxable resources (TTR) and the gross domestic product to develop the formula that identifies where that disaster lands within the historical perspective of previous disasters.

2.2.2. STATE FISCAL CAPACITY - DETERMINING THE COST TO CAPACITY RATIO

The formula shown in figure 1 illustrates how FEMA determines the cost to capacity ratio. The top number in the formula is the estimated cost of IHP, which is gathered from the PDA and based upon uninsured homes, disaster needs, and personal property losses. The bottom number is the TTR (usually identified in the billions of dollars) divided by \$1 million.

$$ICC \text{ Ratio} = \frac{\text{Estimated Cost of IHP from PDA}}{\left(\frac{\text{State TTR}}{\$1,000,000}\right)}$$

Figure 1: Formula to Determine the Cost to Capacity Ratio

The cost of the IHP assistance is then divided by the ICC ratio to come up with the dollar amount. Once calculated, FEMA can implement the cost to capacity ratio into the color-based matrix in the IA Disaster Declaration Template. The position on the matrix is used as an indicator as to where the disaster lands within the historical data gathered by FEMA over the years. It is not a primary factor in determining whether or not a recommendation will go forward for granting a disaster

2.3. Question and Answer Section



Question Posed: “It is my understanding that the IA declaration factors were updated a few years ago. Provide more objective criteria, clarify thresholds for eligibility and speed the declaration process. Since these new factors have gone into effect, have these three objectives been met? The thresholds for eligibility are still not as dependent as public assistance, nor does the declaration process seem to be any faster.”

FEMA Response: “Essentially, with individual assistance, there is no threshold, unlike public assistance that does carry a threshold. What occurs with individual assistance is that during the PDA process, the teams gather as much information as possible regarding the affected area’s impacts. All of these factors are taken into consideration when determining and validating the information that is received in the request. The matrix on the IA Declaration Review Template gives an indication of where this new request falls within that historical data for all other disasters. Using a threshold is something that FEMA has never wanted to do. The President has the authority to grant these requests, and what FEMA does working with the regions and SLTT government is to gather and tell the best story of what occurred in that event and what are the resources that are needed from the federal government to be brought to bear to support recovery? So, in terms of the new factors, as mentioned, these factors were published in 2019. Prior to that, they were slightly different factors, even though a lot of the information is very similar. The factors do help solidify, more precisely, what is gathered and what is used to be considered when looking at declaration requests.”



Question Posed: “How is equity considered in these declarations factors and how is it factored into the cost to capacity and cost estimate matrix?”

FEMA Response: “In terms of the way we currently really look at equity through other through indices and other forms of looking at equity. Those have not necessarily been directly factored into these IA declaration factors. However, using the Census data, a lot of the information that is used in some of the indices is also used through Census data. So, we begin looking at the vulnerable populations and vulnerable communities based upon Census information, and we start looking at what impacts may be

included or what impacts are affecting some of those populations? We start considering those populations in support of making a declaration request. So, we have not implemented anything specific to equity at this point, although there is a workgroup in Headquarters that is looking at equity and how to factor equity into the declaration process. But a lot of that information is currently being utilized through the Census data and how we look at the impacts to those communities and vulnerable populations as we consider the request in processing.”



Question Posed: “Can you go into a little more detail regarding insurance? How much data do you need regarding the amount of people uninsured or underinsured? Does this data come from the damage assessments solely?”

FEMA Response: “Yeah, that’s a great question about insurance. It is a really tough category to get accurate information on. For years, FEMA has been trying to come up with a way to accurately depict the coverage of insurance in any situation. Unfortunately, there is no central database that would allow us to pull accurate information. So, information on insurance is gathered through a couple of different means. It is usually gathered during the PDA process. It is talking to the local government about what some of the insurance coverages may be for that local area. It is also looking at some of the information that can be gathered through the Census. We also start looking at the amount of mortgages that are currently in play, and there is no definitive way of capturing insurance information. It was also mentioned how do we capture the underinsured? Underinsured is something that we can’t necessarily capture because it is almost ill-defined if it is not defined anywhere. Typically, what occurs when a declaration has been granted, and FEMA starts collecting information from the individuals through the application process where we send inspectors out to do their inspection, we will try to verify the insurance. If someone indicates that they have insurance at registration, they’re automatically going to be sent a letter saying that you should be covered for the perils, you know, depending on what the event was. And once they receive their documents back from their insurance company, they are to submit those documents back to FEMA and FEMA will determine if we can assist them beyond their insurance assistance. A lot of times with FEMA now, with the financial assistance caps being raised, we really encourage individuals to submit their insurance documentation very early in the disaster, to get them back and send them to FEMA to see if we can provide them any assistance above and beyond what insurance settlement is. Underinsured is a term that we use quite frequently, but it is really difficult to determine that during the PDA process or during the declaration request process. It is something that usually occurs after the event when applicants start receiving their insurance settlement documents, and then they can send those to FEMA to see whether or not FEMA can assist them in any way.”



Question Posed: “Is there a historical document available or other analytical information that can be shared regarding a correlation between the IHP projected costs based on PDA and the actual? Do they generally trend higher, lower, or about the same, understanding some events are ongoing, when the PDAs are completed and other factors?”

FEMA Response: “There is nothing definitive at this stage. However, we have been working with our Recovery Analytics Division to really look at the PDA data information and then compare it to the post-disaster declaration information. We are seeing some trends, although more work is needed. In some of

the trends, we happen to see that in large events, sometimes the assistance is underestimated in relation to post-disaster events. But in smaller events, it is overestimated. So, a lot of work is being done with our Recovery Analytics Division to really look at the gap that exists between information collected at PDA and post-disaster awards.”



Question Posed: “When there is a denial for IA disaster declarations, states don’t receive thorough written feedback. Is there a plan to change this?”

FEMA Response: “Yes, that is something that has been recently talked about. In summary, it is overworked and worked through with the ORR front office. It is the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the Stafford Act to give certain information, so it will be something that they are working with OCC on to not give what, in some cases, could be pages of information on why and how things are done. So that is something that they are looking into, and they have been looking into over the last 12 months.”



Question Posed: “Is there a way we can pre-load census data by county on our templates or worksheets? Maybe this is something we can do in our regions.”

FEMA Response: “Yes, we continue to work with the regions on how we can improve that data collection process through PDAs and Census, and what have you. A lot of times, Census data may be collected at the state, county, parish, or all the way down to individual tract data. So, depending upon how the regions want to work that, they may be able to be preloaded into some of their data so that when they get the request from the state, they could populate it that way. But, again, there is really no easy way to do that because the disasters are so unpredictable as to where they may occur.”



Question Posed: “With the new factors in place since 2019, has there been an increase in IA declarations versus before the change? Please provide insight if these changes have been more favorable or less favorable to the SLTTs or not.”

FEMA Response: “Our analytics team is currently working on getting several datasets together for items. On a personal level, I can say there have been more IA requests. We have not done the research, and, like I said, we are working with the analytics team to see if there is a new trend, but there is definitely a trend for IA requests.”



Question Posed: “If we had a PDA that does not include ownerships or insurance data, can we use historical data available along with the data from PDAs for damaged homes when submitting a request?”

FEMA Response: “That is an interesting question because there are so many different ways in which information might be able to be gathered through local officials and elsewhere. Again, I used to do a lot of PDAs when I was in the region, and however we could collect the information, as long as you’re able to validate why that information was collected that way or how it was collected, that would suffice. Again, a lot of information is not just readily available, but through census data, through local emergency officials, I know a lot of times when PDA teams go out, they’re going to team up with the local EMA Director or possibly the Fire Chief, Police Chief, or someone in an official capacity that will have better information into that particular local area. So, as long as you’re able to collect the information, validate it as best you can, and explain how that information was gathered, that’s something that, for lack of a database or a system where you can draw from that, that’s how I would recommend having that information.”



Question Posed: “Please explain the appeals process.”

FEMA Response: “The appeals process is exactly the same as the declaration process. So, in an appeal, once they have received their turndown letter, they have 30 days to submit an appeal. The appeal has to come from the governor. Everything is done exactly the same in the appeals process. For a favorable declaration, you would be looking to include more information. So, in an appeal that comes in with no new information, that is likely it is possible to result in the same. So, in appeal, it is better to include more information to bolster the state’s case.”

“Just to highlight that, again, from a programmatic standpoint of review, we always look for what additional information is being provided in the appeal that was not included in the original write-up. We have to look for something different. Again, the decision was already made on the original request, so what in the appeal is different from the original, and what additional damages have been identified.”



Question Posed: “What factors are most attributable to conveying the severity and complexity of the disaster, and how is severity and complexity weighted against the ICC ratio and the TTR?”

FEMA Response: “The correlation to the TTR and ICC ratio, there really is not one at that stage. The complexity comes in the write-up of the actual request. So, when the governor makes the request, they look at those situations and unique circumstances that would make this disaster more challenging or more complex. That is part of the narrative that comes along with the request and the regional write-up. As I mentioned, the template that is used is only a template that is within a document that also is a narrative. It gives the story of what occurred. So, the factors take into account some of those

complexities, but we want the state and the region to focus on what makes it unique or more complex. And they exist; those circumstances exist. We just need to be able to understand that story to put those into some of the factors. I don't want to say any one of those factors stipulates or highlights the complexity, but together they show what the impacts are and the scope of the event. Magnitude is where we start getting into some complexity. It usually requires additional write-up or narrative as to what else is going on that the factors don't capture."



Question Posed: "Is the narrative and regional write-up weighted the same as the ratio and TTR?"

FEMA Response: "I think in terms of reviewing the documents when they come in, the first thing we do is we read the request and the write-up from the region, and then we go to the template to see whether or not all those elements are captured in the template. Of course, you have the primary factors that will most likely drive the event. But, when we talk about going back to the complexity issue, the remaining four factors are where you really start to delve into what additional needs does the government have to bring to bear to support recovery because there may be a lack of capacity or a lack of resources to support that event. That's where your complexity starts to build in. In terms of 'is it weighted differently or equal?' I cannot necessarily say one over the other. It is how it is presented and how it is written. Again, when the state is about to make the request, typically, headquarters and the regions are on the phone and are coordinating so that we get a better understanding of what those impacts are, and we can support each other in making sure that the story is being told in the correct way."

"So, I will piggyback off of that. To give a more concrete answer, I know in the region they are very equal. For example, if you submit a state request with a lot of information, and then your write-up comes in, and it does not address any of that information, we can only use validated information at FEMA. We cannot just go from the state's request. It is severely important to have that write-up to go along with that spreadsheet or workup. It has to be the validation as that's what FEMA uses. So, I would say they are equal as far as where I'm sitting when we write this package up that has to be submitted to the White House. Knowing that we are following the SOPs and the Stafford Act, we have to use the information that has been validated by the regional FEMA representatives. So, I would say yes, and quite possibly, it could be more important to have a real write-up. The regional recommendations that we receive that are low in information are harder to work with. And the reason why we reach back out is because we have to have validated information from FEMA. We cannot just use the governor's request. I would say if they're not 50-50, then maybe the write-up is 55% because then you are signing your name that you have validated the information that was contained in that the governor's request."



Question Posed: "Is it still considered, or was it ever, a requirement to go back and conduct PDAs after an expedited IA declaration was made for catastrophic-type events? It was never clear why this was done and why resources were allocated when actual data generally already

exceeded post-event PDA projections. Regulation, policy, best practices, good idea or not, or is it necessary?"

FEMA Response: "Programmatically in a big event when it is an expedited declaration, we always went back out and did damage assessments, post declaration. That is really used to help support staffing requirements, program requirements, and coordination requirements with other federal agencies and volunteer organizations. It is very challenging that without having a sense of true impacts and the effects of that event, to manage that event. So, typically, in big events, we always encourage people to go out and do those damage assessments, so that we can have a better understanding of the magnitude and provide the proper support in that disaster recovery."

"Also, to be noted that in an expedited request, there could be five areas that were included in there. So, in an expedited request, it doesn't cover the entire state or even the entire damaged areas. The PDAs are needed to see that now we have another area that maybe we couldn't reach when it was expedited."

3. IA Preliminary Damage Assessments

FEMA regional representatives spoke to the PDA process from a regional perspective and a holistic view to build upon the first topic discussed in the May IA Symposium.

3.1. PDA Process Overview

Within FEMA, the disaster declaration process is based on the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Robert T Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act). As a process within the declaration process, the information and guidance within the CFR and the Stafford Act inform and validate the PDA process enacted at the SLTT level.

3.1.1. CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Within the CFR, 44 CFR 206.33 addresses PDAs directly, and FEMA regional staff consider it to be the foundation for conducting PDAs at the regional level. The two direct quotes that the FEMA regional representatives extracted from 44 CFR 206.33 for this presentation are as follows:

- “When an incident occurs, or is imminent, which the State official responsible for disaster operations determines may be beyond the State and local government capabilities to respond, the State will request the Regional Administrator to perform a joint FEMA-State PDA.”
- “It is not anticipated that all occurrences will result in the requirement for assistance; therefore, the State will be expected to verify their initial information, in some manner, before requesting this support.”

3.1.2. REGULATORY AUTHORITY, DOCTRINE, AND GUIDANCE

In addition to the CFR, other regulatory authorities, doctrine, and guidance include the Stafford Act, the FEMA PDA Guide, and the Region 2 Recovery Division Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for PDAs and the Declaration Process.

3.1.3. TIMELINE OF A PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

The timeline of a PDA consists of four steps following an incident. Those steps and their associated tasks are as follows:

- Local and Tribal Governments
 - Assess Damage
 - Collect data to estimate the extent of the damage
- State, Tribe, or Territory
 - Verify Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) data

- Request the Joint PDA
- FEMA Regional Office
 - Review the request from the SLTT for a joint PDA.
 - Validate IDA information
- Joint PDA Team
 - Conduct site visits and assess damage
 - Compile cost estimates and documentation
 - Assess whether PDA data supports a Presidential disaster declaration request

In the first two stages of the timeline, FEMA regional staff reach out to state counterparts to assess how the states are doing, the impacts they faced, if they need any technical assistance or guidance, and more. These first two stages and their respective tasks are part of conducting an IDA.

If a Joint PDA is requested and issued, FEMA deploys resources to support the state in identifying the need for federal assistance and validates the reported damage.

3.1.4. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR'S VALIDATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Administrators Validation and Recommendation (RVAR) provides guidance on the type of information that needs to be put in documents for the PDAs. It contains information regarding the validation of legal requirements, findings from field assessments and data collection efforts, maps of requested areas, and more. Information within the RVAR goes up through the declaration process. The FEMA regional representative provided a template document of an RVAR for participants to better understand the general format and visual aspects of an RVAR and some examples of Validation Key Elements.

3.1.5. IA PDA PLANNING COMPONENTS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION

Some essential elements of information that FEMA is looking for within PDA components include:

- State, tribe, or territory (STT) making the request and the date of request,
- Incident period,
- Number of counties/municipalities anticipated, and
- Summary of initial damages reported by STT.

A more robust information collection process ensures that FEMA personnel that review the documents have minimal to no questions, comments, or concerns regarding the declaration.

3.1.6. IA PDA DATA

The IA PDA teams seek to validate state impact summaries. To do this, FEMA personnel gather data on key areas, including:

- Cause of damage
- Jurisdictions impacted and concentration of damage
- Number of homes impacted and degree of damage
- Types of homes
- Primary or secondary residence
- Homeownership rate of impacted homes
- Percentage of affected households with insurance coverage for the peril
- Inaccessible communities
- Special Flood Hazard Areas, sanctioned communities, Coastal Barrier Resource System zones and other protected areas
- Other relevant PDA data, such as income levels, vulnerable populations, trauma, and special circumstances

3.2. Resources Available to You

The Preliminary Damage Assessment Unit within the FEMA Recovery Directorate aims to support the regions and SLTT partners with any available resources, tools, and data that can help simplify and expedite the PDA process. This portion of the presentation focused on relevant resources that can assist Symposium participants before and during a joint PDA. All provided resources are freely available at www.FEMA.gov/PDA.

3.2.1. PDA REQUEST LETTER TEMPLATE

SLTT partners can use the PDA Request Letter Template to submit a joint PDA request to the FEMA region. Additionally, the Request Letter Template includes information on additional resources and documents that provide information on PDAs and PDA guidance.

3.2.2. INITIAL DAMAGE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Based on feedback received from stakeholders, FEMA created an IDA checklist to identify specific data fields and metrics that the region would need in the IDA process. The checklist serves as a template to ensure that the Joint PDA request contains FEMA-required data.

3.2.3. AERIAL IMAGERY RESOURCES

Another resource that is strongly recommended is aerial imagery. Due to COVID-19, FEMA conducted virtual and hybrid PDA assessments to maintain safety precautions. A resource heavily used during these virtual and hybrid assessments is aerial imagery. Aerial imagery is impactful for field assessments and provides SLTTs with situational awareness regarding disaster-affected areas.

FEMA aerial imagery resources include:

- Civil Air Patrol Post-Incident Imagery
- National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Post-Incident Imagery
- FEMA GeoPlatform Publicly Available Imagery (Remote Sensing)
- Aerial Imagery Options Document

3.2.4. INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAM COST CALCULATOR

The IHP Cost Calculator is a resource available to SLTT partners to determine the cost of individual assistance and the projected cost of an IA Declaration. This tool is purely for situational awareness. The Cost Calculator is a Microsoft Excel-based estimation tool that SLTT partners can use when requesting a Joint PDA and throughout the declarations process to estimate housing assistances as well as other assistance within each county. This calculator can provide potential Individuals and Households Program (IHP) cost projections that can be utilized in the declarations request process.

3.2.5. PDA TRAINING RESOURCES

FEMA provides PDA training resources that are openly available to SLTT partners. Three online PDA training courses and their respective descriptions are as follows:

- IS-772.a: Individual Assistance PDAs
 - This course provides an overview of IA PDAs, the declaration process, and team roles and responsibilities.
- IS-556: Damage Assessment for Public Works
 - This course describes the development or refinement of a damage assessment program for public works agencies.
- IS-559: Local Damage Assessment
 - This course assists the trainee with planning an effective damage assessment program and conducting rapid and effective damage assessments.

The FEMA PDA Unit is currently refining and updating the 2022 PDA Guide to target the new ways of assessment technologies and areas to build on within the PDA process. When completed, the updated 2022 PDA Guide will also be available as a resource for SLTT partners.

3.3. Digital Survey Templates

Another technology option that FEMA offers to SLTTs for use when conducting PDAs is digital surveys. These templates are 100% voluntary to use and are provided to SLTT partners to use as they see fit. The templates can be used as a starting point and customized as needed. Along with the previously discussed resources, the digital survey templates can be located at www.FEMA.gov/PDA.

3.3.1. BENEFITS TO DIGITAL SURVEYS

Digital surveys are beneficial for numerous reasons. Users collect, submit, and validate the data digitally, which eliminates paper copies, scanned PDFs, and any possible physical document loss or untimely processing. Additionally, digital surveys standardize the collection of incident-reported damages across various levels of government, and they provide the ability for personnel at the SLTT level to coordinate seamlessly with the federal level and vice versa. The standardized collection of data also allows for faster validation of data.

These surveys can be used off-line as they will store the data until connected to cell service or a wireless connection.

3.3.2. HOW TO ACCESS THE TEMPLATES

The files are accessible under the “Digital Damage Surveys” page. SLTT partners can download the templates in a Microsoft Excel format. The templates are customizable to fit specific needs.

FEMA suggested that the SLTT partners check the resources link for updates regularly so as not to miss any updates to the provided resources.

3.4. Question and Answer Session



Question Posed: “We were recently told that the Red Cross typically provides some type of damage assessment to FEMA within 72 hours of a declared incident? 1) is this true? If so, 2) how does the information collected from the Red Cross overlap with the type of information the state collects for an IDA?”

FEMA Response: “Typically, yes, our Red Cross partners do conduct damage assessments. Their process is somewhat different to ours, because our process is validating state-reported information. Their process is more frontlining impact summaries. So, they are interested in impacts to households from a Red Cross perspective to turn on their programs or work out things independent of FEMA’s process. But it is unlikely that FEMA is going to be getting a Red Cross report that our state IA counterparts that are working in an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the state level are not going to be getting also. It is

going to be overlapping in the sense that it is going to inform the IDA process. It will also give us a certain level of information that we will be working with our state partners to validate in their reporting process on the other areas that we are talking about, and is less specific to our damage level and quantitative information.”

“So, one thing that I’ll elaborate on similar to the Red Cross, the Red Cross is not the only entity that is out there doing assessments, and one thing that I do not think we did through this process is to talk through the other elements that are useful. A damage assessment process doesn’t just inform a declaration. This helps us to do strategizing on a disaster. So, if I am deployed to work with my state counterparts as an IABD or an incoming branch director, I am going to be using my PDA process to tell me and inform likely areas that I’m going to be targeting for outreach, or it’s going to help me build out my staffing levels for my operation, and the state will be doing a similar thing. My state counterparts are going to be looking at it from the standpoint of ‘what is our strategy to do this with our current resources?’ That will help them prep the deck for the kind of resource thresholds that were talked through in the declaration process. ‘Do we have enough current resources to handle this?’ That is likely a predicate to our PDA process, but there are lots of agencies out there that will be conducting their own versions of assessments on whatever impacts. So, the more partnerships you have with them, the more relationships you have, the better you are at collecting and understanding how they are organizing their information. That will help to feed the damage assessment process in a more expeditious and unified way. And there are lots of agencies out there that do this stuff.”

Next Steps

The IA Division is committed to providing symposiums that address topics identified as important by the regions and SLTT partners. Please collaborate with your regional partners to identify any topics you would be interested in learning about or presenting to the IA community.

An additional IA symposium is scheduled to be held on July 21, 2022. More information about this session will be available at a later date.

Thank you for your interest in FEMA's IA Symposiums. Please continue to engage with FEMA and participate in upcoming events. For questions or more information regarding upcoming events, please contact fema-hq-regional-field-coordination@fema.dhs.gov.