

FEMA's Role in Emergency Management

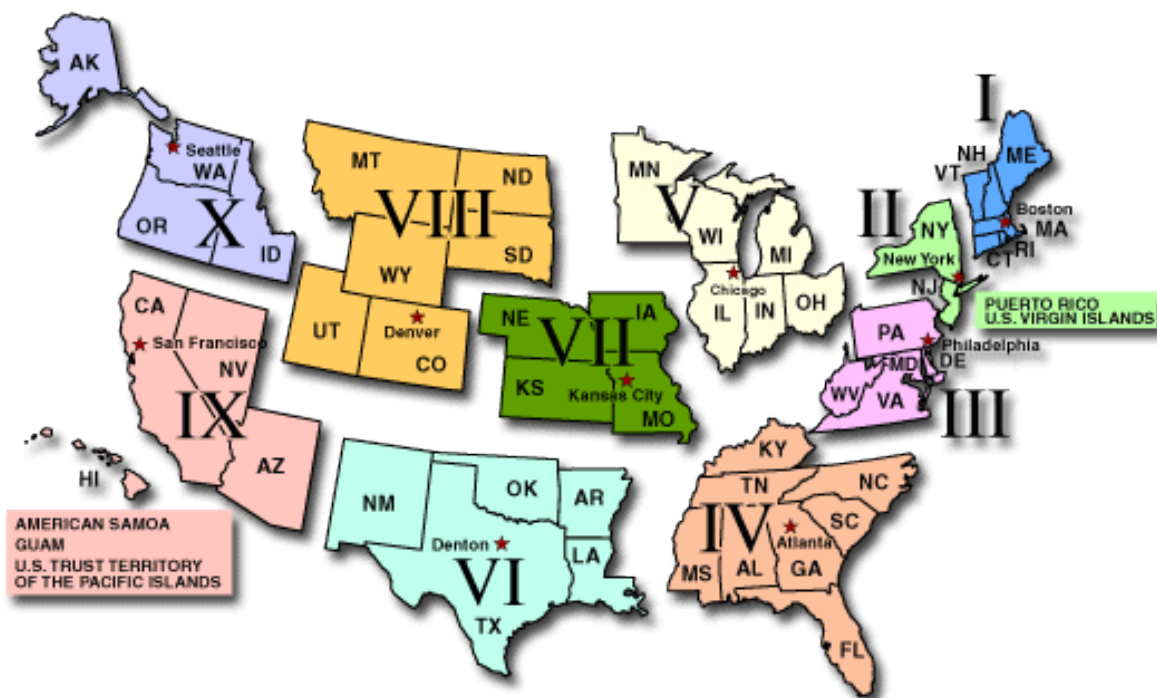
The Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or human-made.¹ One of FEMA's most important functions is the delivery of financial and physical assistance to state and local governments following a presidential disaster declaration, a process established by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (The Stafford Act).² The Stafford Act encourages state and local governments to establish disaster preparedness plans, prepare for better intergovernmental coordination during and following a disaster, and use pre-disaster insurance.

To carry out its mission, FEMA relies heavily on regional field offices that coordinate with state and local emergency managers. Oregon (along with Washington, Idaho, and Alaska) is located within FEMA Region X, headquartered in Bothell, WA. Operating through the Region X office, FEMA works as a team with state and local partners, other federal agencies, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to administer all FEMA-related programs to protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of all hazards in the region.

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FEMA’s engagement in these activities at the community or local level primarily occurs through coordination between the Region X office and the Oregon Office of Emergency Management and county governments. As a result, it is important for electric utilities to understand the relationship between these entities and to develop a direct relationship with emergency management staff within county government.

National Planning Frameworks

FEMA’s work is guided by five frameworks, collectively referred to as the National Planning Frameworks.³ The National Planning Frameworks are intended to describe how entire communities and the nation work together to achieve the country’s National Preparedness Goal:

“A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.”

The five frameworks correspond to the following five mission areas of FEMA: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. According to FEMA, the frameworks are designed to foster a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different community members – from local governments to the top levels of the executive branch of the federal government – to inform better coordination, information sharing, and collaboration.

Prevention

The **National Prevention Framework** describes the capabilities that communities need to avoid, prevent, or stop a threatened or actual act of terrorism. While the framework is focused primarily on acts of terrorism, many of its components are also relevant to advanced knowledge of other types of threats, such as early warning of an imminent earthquake (e.g., the ShakeAlert system).

The framework is intended to identify prevention capabilities and mechanisms for the timely delivery of those capabilities in addition to coordinating prevention capabilities across the community. Core capabilities include planning, public information and warning, operational coordination, and intelligence and information sharing.

Protection

The **National Protection Framework** describes the actions that the entire community should take to “safeguard against acts of terrorism, natural disasters and other threats or hazards.” It includes guidance for leaders at all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individuals.

The framework is intended to identify protection capabilities and align key roles and responsibilities to ensure the delivery of those capabilities in addition to coordinating structures to enable broad stakeholder involvement. Core capabilities include planning, public information and warning, operational coordination, information sharing, physical protective measures, risk management, and supply chain integrity and security.

Mitigation

The **National Mitigation Framework** establishes a common platform to coordinate the management of risk through mitigation capabilities across the entire community. The overall goal of the Framework is to coordinate mitigation efforts to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters.

The Framework seeks to raise community awareness of risks and mitigation strategies. Core capabilities include planning, public information and warning, operational coordination, community resilience, long-term vulnerability reduction, risk and disaster resilience assessment, and threats and hazards identification.

Response

The **National Response Framework** guides the national response to all types of disasters and emergencies and builds upon the scalable, flexible, and adaptable concepts identified in the National Incident Management System. The framework identifies specific authorities and defines best practices for managing the response to incidents ranging from local-impact events to large-scale terrorist attacks or natural disasters. The objectives of the framework are to define the capabilities necessary to save lives, protect property and the environment, meet basic human needs, stabilize the incident, restore basic service and community functions, and secure a safe environment to transition to recovery efforts.

The framework describes core principles, roles and responsibilities, and coordinating structures necessary to respond at any time to threats or hazards, in anticipation of a significant event, or in response to a specific incident. Core capabilities include planning, public information and warning, operational coordination, critical transportation, environmental response, fatality management, fire management, infrastructure systems, mass search and rescue, operational communications, public health, and situational assessment.

The National Response Framework also defines Emergency Support Functions and the Incident Command System.

Recovery

The **National Disaster Recovery Framework** provides guidance to promote effective recovery from large-scale or catastrophic events. Through this framework, FEMA can fund authorized federal disaster support activities as well as providing direct federal assistance for eligible state, territorial, tribal, and local actions. It is also through this framework that FEMA, following a declaration of a major disaster by the President, can reimburse states for lifesaving and life-sustaining expenditures.

The framework defines core recovery principles, roles and responsibilities of recovery coordinators, guidance for pre- and post-disaster recovery planning, and a coordinating structure that facilitates communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Core capabilities include planning, public information and warning, operational coordination, economic recovery, health and social services, housing, infrastructure systems, and natural and cultural resources.

National Incident Management System

NIMS⁴ is a companion of the National Response Framework that is of particular relevance to electric utilities.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:

“NIMS is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines . . . [and] NIMS provides a consistent nationwide framework and approach to enable government at all levels (Federal, State, tribal, and local), the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to work together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents regardless of the incident’s cause, size, location, or complexity.”

The system has been designed such that entities (like utilities) that have integrated NIMS into their planning and incident management structure can “arrive at an incident with little notice and still understand the procedures and protocols governing the response, as well as the expectations for equipment and personnel.”

The **Incident Command System** (ICS) has been developed as one of the fundamental elements of NIMS. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, ICS provides a “flexible, yet standardized core mechanism for coordinated and collaborative incident management” and has become a standard best practice for emergency management across the country. [Several consumer-owned utilities in Oregon](#) have trained, or plan to train, their employees in ICS protocols. In short, training utility staff in ICS allows them to “speak the same language” during an emergency when coordinating activities with other organizations utilizing ICS (e.g., state and federal agencies).

FEMA updates these Frameworks on a regular basis. To find the latest version of one or all of the Frameworks, visit [FEMA’s website](#).

FEMA Funding Opportunities

To help achieve the National Preparedness Goal, FEMA offers several funding opportunities focused on pre- and post-disaster actions. This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of all funding opportunities available from FEMA that might be of interest to electric utilities; it is an overview of these types of funding opportunities and describes, at a high-level, the FEMA process with which utilities may benefit from having a general familiarity.

A required step for an entity to become eligible for many types of non-emergency FEMA funding is the development and approval of a **hazard mitigation plan**. According to FEMA, HMPs are intended to “reduce the loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters” and should be implemented under a comprehensive, long-term mitigation plan that identifies risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and defines long-term strategies to protect people and property from future hazards.⁵ These plans must be developed according to FEMA guidelines, submitted to FEMA for review and approval, and updated every five years.

An electric utility may either develop its own plan or develop an annex to an existing HMP, such as that of the city or county(s) in which the utility operates. If interested, eligible entities may also participate in training courses offered by FEMA Region X to assist in the development of HMPs. More information about the trainings and the development of HMPs is available on [FEMA’s website](#).

Funding, Education, and Training Opportunities

Pre-Disaster Mitigation: This is one of FEMA’s three Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) funding programs. Authorized by Section 203 of the Stafford Act, the PDM program is designed to assist states, territories, tribes, and local communities to implement a sustained, pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program. The goal of this funding is to reduce the overall risk to the population and structures from future hazard events, and to reduce future reliance on post-disaster federal assistance.

Flood Mitigation Assistance: This is also one of FEMA’s three Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding programs. Authorized by the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, Flood Mitigation Assistance funding is directed to states, territories, tribes, or local governments for projects and planning activities that will reduce or eliminate long-term risk of flood damage to structures that are insured under the National Flood Insurance Program.

Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program: The RCPGP is a grant funding program intended to support coordination of regional all-hazard planning for catastrophic events, including the development of integrated planning communities, plans, protocols, and procedures to manage a catastrophic event.



Pre-
Disaster

Funding, Education, and Training Opportunities (continued)

National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program: Established in 1977, the NEHRP is intended to reduce fatalities, injuries, and property losses from earthquakes. The work of the program encompasses research, development, and implementation activities, including the development of strategies, tools, techniques and other measures to reduce the adverse effects of earthquakes by strengthening earthquake resilience in at-risk communities. The NEHRP is coordinated and implemented jointly by FEMA, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program: The NTHMP is designed to protect people and reduce property losses in the event of a tsunami. The program is led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with support from FEMA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Science Foundation, and state emergency management offices in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington. FEMA administers the NTHMP's Mitigation Subcommittee, provides training and technical assistance, including design and construction guidance, and risk assessment. FEMA also produces public information related to tsunami preparedness, mitigation, and response.

NIMS and ICS All-Hazards Training Program: As described above, NIMS and ICS are a critical component of emergency management that enables scalable, flexible coordinated management of incidents across jurisdictions. FEMA's Emergency Management Institute works in collaboration with entire communities to provide training in support of NIMS and ICS. The primary goal of these trainings is to provide advanced level training needed by personnel responsible for managing incidents of greater complexity than those typically encountered during routine operations.

Funding

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program: This is the third of FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding programs. Authorized by Section 404 of the Stafford Act, the purpose of HMGP funding is for communities to implement hazard mitigation measures following a major disaster that are intended to reduce the risk of loss of life and property from future disasters. This funding only becomes available to areas impacted by a disaster following a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration at the request of a Governor or Tribal Executive.

Public Assistance Grant Program: This funding is only available following a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration. Grant funding is provided to state and local governments to respond to and recover from the devastating effects of disasters by providing assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, restoration, and reconstruction or replacement of public facilities or infrastructure that have been damaged or destroyed.

Fire Management Assistance Grant Program: FEMA’s FMAGP funding is available to states, tribes, and local governments for the mitigation, management, and control of fires on publicly or privately owned forests or grasslands. The process to initiate funding through FMAGP occurs when a state submits a request for assistance to their Regional FEMA Director at the time that a “threat of major disaster” exists. When authorized, FMAGP provides a 75 percent federal cost share, with the state paying the remaining 25 percent of actual costs.

Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018

In addition to the funding opportunities described above, H.R. 302 was signed into law in October 2018. That bill contained the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 and enacted several key provisions related to potential funding of energy resilience projects.

Prioritization of Facilities (Section 1208)

Requires FEMA to provide guidance and annual training for state, local, and tribal governments, in addition to first responders and utility companies, on the need to prioritize assistance to certain critical facilities so that they can maintain functionality, or return to critical function as soon as practicable. For example, consistent with the themes presented in the *Guidebook*, FEMA’s guidance and training will highlight the importance of coordination among state and local governments and energy providers, and of the importance of prioritizing power restoration for critical public facilities.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for Earthquakes (Section 1233)

Authorizes FEMA to provide assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program for activities that help reduce the risk of future damage in areas affected by earthquake hazards.

National Public Infrastructure Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Program (Section 1234)

This section of the DRRRA enhances the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, described above, by providing funding for state and local governments to establish and implement consensus-based specifications and standards and to incorporate hazard-resistance into project designs, construction, and maintenance.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for Resilience (Section 1235a)

Modifies the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, described above, to ensure that investments made with funding from that program increases resilience to future damage, hardship, loss, or suffering.

Public Assistance 406 Codes and Standards (Section 1235b)

Authorizes FEMA to provide Public Assistance funding to upgrade certain facilities previously damaged by disasters to the latest codes, specifications, or standards to ensure that the facilities incorporate the latest hazard-resistant designs. Previously, funding could only be used to rebuild facilities to the existing codes and standards at the time the disaster had occurred.

Find more information on the implementation of these, and other, provisions of the [Disaster Relief and Recovery Act of 2018 by FEMA](#).

Other Federal Funding Opportunities

The State Recovery Plan, meanwhile, includes information on a variety of additional federal funding programs that may be of interest to electric utilities. In addition to the FEMA funding described above, the following federal funding opportunities are identified:⁶

[Coastal Resilience Grants Program \(National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration\)](#)

Funds used for activities with beneficial public outcomes that enhance resilience of coastal communities for natural hazard and climate risks.

[Planning Program and Local Technical Assistance Program \(Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration\)](#)

Funding through this program is intended to assist recipients in creating economic development plans and studies designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. Funding is intended particularly for the nation's most economically distressed regions, with high unemployment or underemployment.

Investments for Public Works and Economic Development Facilities (Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration)

Grants can be utilized to support the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities necessary to generate or retain private sector jobs, promote regional competitiveness, and accelerate new business development.

Economic Adjustment Assistance Program (Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration)

Following a Presidential Disaster Declaration, this funding can be used to respond to the short- and long-term effects of severe economic dislocation events. Funds can be utilized for planning, technical assistance, revolving loan funds, and infrastructure construction to accelerate economic recovery.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also has several funding opportunities for which consumer-owned utilities in Oregon may be eligible:

Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program (USDA – Rural Development)

The Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program makes insured loans and loan guarantees to non-profit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities to finance the construction of electric generation, transmission, and distribution facilities in rural areas, including system improvements, demand-side management, energy conservation, and on- and off-grid renewable energy systems.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Loan Program (USDA – Rural Development)

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Loan Program provides loans to finance energy efficiency and conservation projects for commercial, industrial, and residential consumers. Eligible utilities, including existing Rural Utilities Service borrowers, can borrow money tied to Treasury rates of interests and re-lend the money to develop new and diverse energy service products within their service territories.

Energy Resource Conservation (USDA – Rural Development)

The Energy Resource Conservation program enables current Rural Utilities Service borrowers to make funds available to their consumers for energy conservation and renewable energy projects by deferring payment of principal and interest. Participation is limited to current Rural Utilities Service borrowers, and funds may be used for labor and materials related to energy conservation or renewable energy projects.

Distributed Generation Energy Project Financing (USDA – Rural Development)

The Rural Utilities Service Electric Program can provide loans and loan guarantees to energy project developers for distributed energy projects including renewables that provide wholesale or retail electricity to existing Electric Program borrowers or to rural communities served by other utilities.

References

¹ <https://www.fema.gov/about-agency>

² [Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act](#), Public Law 100-707, signed into law November 23, 1988; amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Public Law 93-288.

³ https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1466016288879-63f68f6dced909f08cf8687deaa8e718/Overview_of_National_Planning_Frameworks.pdf

⁴ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, NIMS: Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/nimsfaqs.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning>

⁶ Oregon Office of Emergency Management, State Recovery Plan, SRF 6-17 through SRF 6-28.



This Deep Dive is part of the *Oregon Guidebook for Local Energy Resilience: For Small and Medium Utilities*, first published in June 2019.

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