

*State of Wisconsin*

**Guidelines  
for  
Assessing and Documenting  
Disaster Damage**

**Part 1: Immediately After the  
Event**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose.....	3
Process .....	3
Organization.....	3
Pre-Designated Damage Assessment Teams .....	3
Private Sector Damage Assessment Team.....	4
Public Sector Damage Assessment Team.....	4
Phase 1; Phases of Damage Assessment.....	5
The Uniform Disaster Situation Report (UDSR).....	5
Quick Reference Guide for Individual Assistance PDA.....	7
Sample Methodology for Calculating Residential Damage.....	8
Subgrantee (Applicant) Responsibilities.....	9

# **DAMAGE ASSESSMENT**

## ***PURPOSE***

Damage assessment is the process of determining the location, nature, and severity of damage sustained by the public and private sectors after a disaster. The typical damage assessment will estimate the losses, and the impact of those losses, on the affected individuals and communities. The damage assessment process is a responsibility shared by federal, state, county and local governments. Each level of government must be prepared to carry out its role to complement and support the others. This document focuses on the role of the county and local governmental units in the damage assessment process.

A strong damage assessment supported by accurate information will:

- ✚ identify the needs of individuals and communities affected by the disaster.
- ✚ determine if county and local resources are sufficient to address those needs or if they must be supplemented with state and federal resources.
- ✚ identify, allocate and prioritize the state and federal resources that are needed for the response and recovery efforts.
- ✚ document and substantiate requests for federal assistance.

## ***PROCESS***

Assessing the damage caused by a particular event is essentially a three-phased process. Each phase of the process serves a distinct purpose and will be explained further on subsequent pages.

Phase 1 begins immediately after the disaster, but in some cases may actually begin during the event. Its purpose is to be prepared to respond to any immediate requests for assistance, such as sandbags or protective measures.

Phase 2 is a more detailed look at the needs and usually occurs prior to a request for federal or state assistance so that the most accurate and timely information can be included in the Governor's request.

Phase 3 takes place after a federal or state declaration is received. Its purpose is to review and update the information previously gathered in order to prioritize the delivery of assistance.

## ***ORGANIZATION***

A disaster affects many different facets of a community, thus the collection of disaster information necessarily involves many sources. No single source or agency exists that can provide all of the information that is needed. The county emergency management director is responsible for developing contacts with all sources and agencies. This leads to strong countywide damage assessment capabilities and enables efficient coordination of the process within the county when it is needed.

### ***Pre-Designated Damage Assessment Teams***

In order to coordinate the disaster assessment process, the county emergency management director must have a team of individuals identified and organized prior to an emergency. The county emergency management director must examine the county's organizational structure, personnel resources and other capabilities in order to

determine the most appropriate composition of the teams. Team members should be given specific damage assessment assignments, either by geographic location or type of damage. This ensures that no areas are missed and that there is no duplication of effort. The efforts of this team should be guided by procedures that are set forth in the county emergency operations plan.

The county emergency management director is the damage assessment team leader and plays a key role in training and preparing the team for activation. S/he should develop procedures for activating the team and provide regular training to the team members. Each member needs to know what information they are responsible for gathering, the geographical area they are responsible for assessing, how to submit the information (via phone, two-way radio, etc.) and to whom, and when it should be done.

Upon receipt of the information submitted by team members, the county director must consolidate it into one comprehensive report about the county and disseminate it to key decision-makers within the county and to the State Division of Emergency Management.

Separate teams must be organized to assess the damages to the private sector (homes, personal property, private industry, businesses, and agricultural losses) and the public sector (bridges, roads, public facilities, costs incurred by local units of government for debris clearance, police and fire costs, etc.).

***Private Sector Damage Assessment Team***

The private sector team should be composed of individuals who have work experience in, or with, the private sector, including but not limited to: tax assessors, building inspectors, village and town clerks, real estate and insurance agents, representatives of volunteer agencies such as Red Cross, etc. Each municipality in the county and affected by the event should be represented on the team, preferably by a municipal official or an officially designated contact person. Contact should be established with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) as they must do their own assessment of agricultural losses for USDA purposes. Coordination must be maintained within the County and among the various teams at all times.

***Public Sector Damage Assessment Team***

The public sector damage assessment team will also need to draw upon a variety of expertise. This team should include highway commissioners, public works directors or engineers, sanitarians, parks and street department representatives and municipal clerks. Each municipality should also designate someone who is responsible for keeping track of the costs incurred in the response and recovery effort and for maintaining records of all disaster-related expenditures. This information will have to be supplied upon request to the county emergency management director for possible federal or state assistance.

# PHASES OF DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

## *Phase 1: Immediately After the Disaster Begins*

When a disaster occurs anywhere in the State, Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) relies on the county emergency management director to report on the situation and to provide timely damage assessment information. If the disaster is such that multiple agencies are involved in the response effort, or if it is of such magnitude that state and/or federal assistance may be required, then the county emergency management director should immediately notify the WEM regional director that such a disaster has occurred. The regional director will, in turn, notify WEM Central Office.

### *Uniform Disaster Situation Report (UDSR)*

The Uniform Disaster Situation Report (UDSR) is the state's standard damage assessment reporting form. An example is included with this document along with instructions (pages 9-14) and the same information can be downloaded as Word documents from the WEM website at <http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/recovery/process.asp>. The UDSR should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the onset of the event. The report may be faxed or sent electronically to both the regional director and the central office. The submission should include a map of the damaged area as well as any additional information deemed appropriate.

The UDSR, when properly completed, provides a useful summary of a specific disaster situation. It is imperative that the form be completed as thoroughly and accurately as possible. In order to accomplish this, the county director will have to quickly activate and brief the county damage assessment team. A good UDSR provides:

- ✚ the scope of the disaster in terms of damages and injuries to private and public sector.
- ✚ information as to the personnel and equipment necessary to effectively manage the disaster situation.
- ✚ compelling information for the Governor to decide if and what types of state or federal assistance will be requested or made available.

The Division recognizes that this first UDSR will consist of the county director's best *estimates*, compiled from information gathered by the public and private sector damage assessment teams. In such a short time, it is not possible to get a totally accurate assessment of the damage occurring in a given county. Nonetheless, it is critical that the report be timely. It provides the state and, through the state, the federal government, with its first indication of the magnitude of the situation and of the potential need for supplementary assistance.

WEM reviews the UDSR's upon receipt and a determination is made as to whether or not assistance can or should be requested. This determination is made on a county-by-county basis. There are a number of different assistance options for the Division to consider when reviewing the UDSRs. The Division will confer with the affected county emergency management directors and make a recommendation to the Governor's Office as to which option(s) is most appropriate. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region V is also kept apprised of the situation throughout the review process.

County directors are responsible for amending the UDSR as the situation evolves and as additional information becomes available. This can be done via phone, fax or e-mail to the regional and central offices. This is extremely important in prolonged flooding events, but any event can change dramatically in the space of a short time and updates should be submitted.

The county director is also required to submit a complete and final UDSR to the Division. In its final form it will serve as both a damage assessment report and a record of the event, describing the full extent of the disaster's impact on the public and private sectors and summarizing the involvement of local/county, private, and volunteer agencies in the response and recovery effort. The final report should be sent to the WEM Central Office in Madison, with a copy to the Regional Director, within two to three weeks of the disaster occurrence, or when the county director deems it appropriate to submit a final document.

A request for federal assistance must describe the extent of damage; identifying the state, county and local resources in use or already exhausted; and specify what types of assistance are needed to alleviate the suffering and loss caused by the disaster. If the review of the UDSR's by WEM and the Governor indicate that the situation is of sufficient magnitude, then the Governor, with input from WEM, will request that FEMA coordinate with the State in conducting a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA). The PDA documents the need for assistance and forms the basis of the request for Presidential assistance. The PDA begins the second phase of the damage assessment process.

## QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Category of Damage	Definition	Flood Examples	Tornado Examples
Affected	Dwellings with minimal damage to structure and/or contents and the home is habitable without repairs.	Minimal damage to structure and home is habitable without repairs.	Minimal damage to structure and home is habitable without repairs.
Minor	The home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in a short period of time.	One foot or more of water/sewer backup in basement and furnace/water heater damaged. If no basement, one foot or less of water on first floor. <i>Note: If water has remained in structure for more than a day, more extensive damage may have occurred, check foundation.</i>	Windows or doors blown in, 1 wall damaged. Holes in the roof caused by the storm, but roofing components intact.
Major	The home has sustained structural or significant damages, is uninhabitable and requires extensive repairs.	One foot or more of water on the first floor of a home with a basement, with furnace and water heater in said basement. If no basement, 2 to 4 feet of water in the home, also dependent on the length of time the home was inundated.	Substantial failures of structural components of the house, (e.g., walls, floors, foundation, etc.)
Destroyed	The home is a total loss or damaged to such an extent that repairs are not economically feasible. Structure is permanently uninhabitable. An unaffected structure that will obviously require removal or demolition due to imminent damage from landslides, mudslides, sinkholes, etc.	Complete failure of major components of the structure; e.g., basement wall/foundation, walls, roof, etc. House pushed off foundation. <i>Note: Depth, velocity and duration of water in and around the structure may have a significant impact on degree of damage; e.g., mold formation</i>	Only foundation remains or two or more walls destroyed and roof substantially damaged or destroyed.

**In all flood events, provide information regarding water levels and duration of flood.**

# SAMPLE METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING RESIDENTIAL DAMAGE

## Overall average method

1. *Damage Factors:*

Affected/Minor	1-30%	use 15% as median
Major	31-80%	use 55% as median
Destroyed	81-100%	use 100%

2. *For each Category (Affected/Minor, Major, Destroyed):*

Average Market Value of Home in Township/Municipality  
x Number of Homes Damaged per Category  
x Damage Factor  
= Estimated Dollar Damages

3. *Sample Calculation:*

The Average Market Value of a single-family home in Badger County is \$100,000.

12 homes were judged to have minor damage, 2 had major damages and 1 was destroyed.

$$\$100,000 \times 12 \times 0.15 = \$180,000$$

$$\$100,000 \times 2 \times 0.55 = \$110,000$$

$$\$100,000 \times 1 \times 1 = \$100,000$$

Total Damages Estimated At \$390,000

## *Subgrantee (Applicant) Responsibilities*

Submit a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) at the Applicants Briefing or within 30 days of the declaration to the State Public Assistance Officer, County Emergency Management Director or Disaster Field Office.

1. **It is vital to maintain accurate records.** You must be able to document all disaster-related expenditures to the satisfaction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). You should immediately begin to accumulate, in one place, all records and documents that support or relate to costs for which you will request reimbursement.
2. Prepare a list of work performed and facilities damaged as a direct result of the disaster. This list should segregate work and damages into those categories that are eligible. Include both work that has been completed and that which has not, and all related costs incurred.
3. If possible, take photographs of sites during the event but certainly before any work is started so that the full extent of the damage can be seen. This is especially important when the work is already completed.
4. All damage sites should be identified and relevant information gathered prior to the meeting with your Public Assistance Coordinator Crew Leader (PAC Crew Leader) at a Kickoff Meeting.
5. Ensure that the person designated to accompany FEMA during project formulation and validation is knowledgeable of completed work and locations of those sites where work remains to be completed.
6. Be prepared to provide a detailed cost breakdown of work performed by your own forces (**Force Account Work**). This includes costs for personnel, equipment and materials for all completed work. Documentation could include:
  - A. Copies of payroll records, time cards, etc. Include regular and overtime costs as well as fringe benefits. Specify who the personnel were, job classification, where work was done, and what they did.
  - B. Equipment logs. Describe the piece of equipment, hourly rate charged, dates and hours used, location where used and for what purpose. Use Wisconsin DOT or FEMA furnished equipment rates.
  - C. Materials from own stock, specify the category of work, location where and/or how the materials and supplies were used.
7. Be prepared to describe which projects will be repaired or reconstructed by **contract**. If a contractor's estimate has been received, have it available for the inspectors.
8. If damaged facilities are to be rebuilt to conform to new codes, specifications or standards, be prepared to provide copies of the specifications, local resolutions, ordinances, etc.

9. Have information available on insurance coverage such as copies of insurance policies and the amount of any insurance settlement received.
  
10. Maintain records to document **all** costs for disaster related work. For work which is contracted, copies of the following documents will be required: bid specifications, requests for bids, bid documents, contract when let, invoices from the contractor, checks issued for payment and any other pertinent documents.