

*State of Wisconsin*

**Guidelines  
for  
Assessing and Documenting  
Disaster Damage**

**Part 3: After the Federal  
Disaster Declaration**

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# **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 3: After a Federal or State Declaration***

The third and final phase of the damage assessment process occurs after the President issues a disaster declaration or the Wisconsin Disaster Fund is made available.

### ***FEMA Public Assistance Program***

If the State receives the Presidential Declaration, individuals, businesses, private non-profit and public entities will have to undergo an inspection or assessment to determine the amount of assistance they will receive. WEM and the county emergency management director have little or no role in the private sector's (individuals and businesses) application to FEMA as the private sector is responsible for preparing for the FEMA inspectors on its own.

On the other hand, the county emergency management director plays a critical role in working with all applicants with public sector damages in his/her county to prepare for this critical inspection which determines the amount of Public Assistance provided by FEMA.

As soon as possible after the declaration is made, local governments and private non-profit agencies that have incurred costs or suffered disaster-related expenditures will be asked to attend an Applicant's Briefing to obtain information on the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs. It is the county emergency management director's job to ensure that all potential applicants within his/her county attend this meeting. At the briefing each municipality will complete a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) that indicates they have incurred disaster-related expenditures and want to apply for assistance.

Based on information from the RPA's, a Public Assistance Coordinator Crew Leader (PAC Crew Leader) will be assigned to each eligible applicant. The PAC will become the applicant's point of contact for their Public Assistance projects. The PAC Crew Leader, and applicant, with occasional assistance from WEM staff, will determine the amount of assistance that will be needed by the jurisdiction to bring the damaged areas back to their pre-disaster condition. The damage assessment information that has been gathered by the Damage Assessment Teams and during the PDA is critical to this step. It will document the costs associated with the work that has already completed, cost estimates for work to be completed, and cost-effective mitigation measures. Cost estimates for each Public Assistance project are established through use of the Project Worksheet which is reviewed and signed by the PAC and the local applicant.

Once the Project Worksheets have been completed and validated, funds will be obligated by FEMA. Wisconsin Emergency Management will be notified of the amount of the approval and will forward a completed application package to the applicant through the county emergency management director.

### ***Hazard Mitigation Grant Program***

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is made available after the President grants a disaster declaration and is separate from mitigation measures that may be completed as part of a PA repair project. The HMGP assists state and local governments and eligible private, non-profit organizations in implementing long-term mitigation measures. As mentioned above, information

on the HMGP will be provided at the Applicant's Briefing. Again, the damage assessments, including the PDA, should have identified Mitigation opportunities.

### ***Wisconsin Disaster Fund***

If the State does not receive a Presidential Declaration or fails to meet the threshold to be eligible for a Presidential Declaration, the Wisconsin Disaster Fund (WDF) is made available to those applicants with public sector damages. Information gathered during the various assessments, including the FEMA PDA, are used to document the damage and the repair costs. Since WDF is a reimbursement program, documentation of the damages and costs are submitted to WEM after the work has been completed. Review of the materials is completed at WEM and 70% of the eligible costs are reimbursed.

### ***Recovery***

The process of refining damage figures and determining a disaster's impacts should be continued throughout short and long term recovery. While FEMA is usually on site quickly, there are other supplemental funding programs that will not become available until later. The more detailed the information gathered during all phases of the damages assessments, including the extent of the damages and socio-economic impacts, the easier it will be to justify the need for additional assistance.

The damage assessment information can be used by a county or municipality to apply for assistance from Community Development Block Grant funds, United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, Small Business Administration or Economic Development Administration. In addition, county and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) long-term recovery committees will use the information for identify areas with unmet needs and develop strategies to meet those needs.

The damage and impact information you have gathered will help guide a community's recovery efforts and support future hazard mitigation planning which will decrease the impact of the damages from future disaster events.

## *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.

## **Public Assistance Program**

### ***Categories of Work, Documentation & Red Flags***

FEMA separates project worksheets (PWs) into emergency work and permanent work. Emergency work includes Category A and Category B. Permanent work includes Categories C through G. Below is a description of each of the categories, documentation recommendations, and questions you should be prepared to answer for a FEMA representative.

- Look for the red flags items that could impact your ability to be reimbursed through the FEMA Public Assistance Program.

A very important reminder: Keep original documents and photos!! Only give copies to FEMA.

#### **Category A - Debris Removal**

- Was force account equipment/labor used?
- Did you use any rental equipment?
- Was any volunteer labor, equipment, or materials used?
- Was any of the debris removal done through a contract? How was the contract procured?
- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract
- Did you stage the debris? If so, where?
- Staging debris in the floodplain could jeopardize funding
- How did you dispose of the debris? Certified landfill? Chop & drop? Burn?
- Get any necessary debris disposal or burning permits.
- How many total cubic yards of debris did you remove and how much remaining?
- Was debris woody/vegetative? Were there any hazardous materials or white goods (Refrigerator, washer/dryer)
- Do you have any insurance for debris removal?

Documentation for Category A can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or other materials purchased
- Record of any volunteer labor, equipment, and materials (sign-in/sign-out sheets with names and dates are sufficient, listing of donated materials). These items may not be reimbursable, but a dollar value can be assigned and it may be used as a “credit” towards your cost share on other projects.
- Insurance policy

## Category B - Emergency Protective Measures

Was the work necessary to eliminate or reduce an immediate threat to life, public health, safety, and/or improved property?

Did you perform any search and rescue?

Were there any evacuations or emergency shelters for humans or animals?

Were any roads temporarily closed due to hazardous conditions?

Did you perform emergency pumping or emergency repairs for roads, utilities or buildings?

Did you purchase any materials such as sand or sandbags?

Was force account equipment/labor used?

Did you use any rental equipment?

Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?

- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract

Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?

- In most cases, mutual aid is not reimbursable. Written and signed mutual aid agreements can be put in place prior to an event stipulating under what circumstances localities will bill each other for services. The agreement cannot state that billing is contingent on a Federal declaration, however it can be contingent on a State declaration (a state of emergency)

Was any volunteer labor, equipment, or materials used?

Do you have any insurance for any of the emergency protective measures taken?

Documentation for Category B can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or other materials purchased
- Record of any volunteer labor, equipment, and materials (sign-in/sign-out sheets with names and dates are sufficient, listing of donated materials). These items may not be reimbursable, but a dollar value can be assigned and it may be used as a “credit” towards your cost share on other projects.
- Insurance policy

## Category C - Road and Bridge Systems

Are the roads your legal responsibility to repair and/or maintain?

Are any of the damaged roads a part of a Federal-Aid route? Typically only debris removal is allowed on these roads. Permanent repairs are normally not reimbursable through the FEMA Public Assistance program.

Was force account equipment/labor used?

Did you use any rental equipment?

- Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?
- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract
- Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?
- What materials and how much of each was used? Were materials from stock or purchased new for disaster repairs?
- For all work completed, labor/equipment hours, materials, GPS coordinates, photos, and dimensions of the damage area will be needed for each site. Having these elements organized prior to meeting with your FEMA representative will save time.
- Were any drainage structures, such as culverts, damaged?
- Do you have maintenance records for the roads prior to the event? Bridge inspection reports?
- If roads or bridges were poorly maintained prior to the event, or if no maintenance records are available, reimbursement may be limited.
- Have your or will you repair the damages above and beyond their pre-disaster condition? This is considered hazard mitigation and some items can be funded. See FEMA mitigation policy 9526.1 for details.
- Were any of the damages insured?

Documentation for Category C can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs of damage and any repairs made
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or materials purchased
- Stock pricing for any materials used from stock
- Maintenance records/bridge inspection reports
- Drawings, sketches, or engineering plans
- Insurance policy

**Category D - Water Control Facilities (dam, levee, reservoir, engineered drainage channel, irrigation facility, pumping facility, etc.)**

- Are the damaged facilities your legal responsibility to repair and/or maintain?
- Was force account equipment/labor used?
- Did you use any rental equipment?
- Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?
- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract.
- Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?

What materials and how much of each was used? Were materials from stock or purchased new for disaster repairs?

For all work completed, labor/equipment hours, materials, GPS coordinates, photos, and dimensions of the damage area will be needed for each site. Having these elements organized prior to meeting with your FEMA representative will save time.

Do you have maintenance records from prior to the event?

■ If facilities were poorly maintained prior to the event, or if no maintenance records are available, reimbursement may be limited.

■ Have your or will you repair the damages above and beyond their pre-disaster condition? This is considered hazard mitigation and some items can be funded. See FEMA mitigation policy 9526.1 for details.

Are any of the damaged facilities insured?

Documentation for Category D can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs of damage and any repairs made
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or materials purchased
- Stock pricing for any materials used from stock
- Maintenance records/bridge inspection reports
- Drawings, sketches, or engineering plans
- Insurance policy

## **Category E - Buildings and Equipment**

Are the damaged facilities your legal responsibility to repair and/or maintain?

What was the impact of the damage? Was the building closed? Were/are temporary facilities necessary?

Were any contents damaged?

Was the building in active use or was it vacant?

Was force account equipment/labor used?

Did you use any rental equipment?

Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?

■ Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract

Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?

What materials and how much of each was used? Were materials from stock or purchased new for disaster repairs?

For all work completed, labor/equipment hours, materials, GPS coordinates, photos, and dimensions of the damage area will be needed for each site. Having these elements organized prior to meeting with your FEMA representative will save time.

- Do you have maintenance records from prior to the event?
  - If facilities were poorly maintained prior to the event, or if no maintenance records are available, reimbursement may be limited.
  - Have you or will you repair the damages above and beyond their pre-disaster condition? This is considered hazard mitigation and some items can be funded. See FEMA mitigation policy 9526.1 for details.
  - Are you interested in an improved or alternate project? Speak to the State and FEMA representatives before construction begins.
- Are any of the damaged facilities insured? Have you filed a claim with your insurance company?

Documentation for Category E can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs of damage and any repairs made
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or materials purchased
- Stock pricing for any materials used from stock
- Maintenance records/bridge inspection reports
- Drawings, sketches, or engineering plans
- Insurance policy
- Any lease agreements

**Category F – Utility Systems (water treatment plants, power generation and distribution, communications, etc.)**

Are the damaged facilities your legal responsibility to repair and/or maintain?

Did you incur any increased operating expenses?

Have surveys been conducted for known and unknown damages?

Was the facility shut down? Were temporary services/facilities established?

Was force account equipment/labor used?

Did you use any rental equipment?

Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?

- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract

Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?

What materials and how much of each was used? Were materials from stock or purchased new for disaster repairs?

For all work completed, labor/equipment hours, materials, GPS coordinates, photos, and dimensions of the damage area will be needed for each site. Having these elements organized prior to meeting with your FEMA representative will save time.

Do you have maintenance records from prior to the event?

- If facilities were poorly maintained prior to the event, or if no maintenance records are available, reimbursement may be limited.
  - Have your or will you repair the damages above and beyond their pre-disaster condition? This is considered hazard mitigation and some items can be funded. See FEMA mitigation policy 9526.1 for details.
  - Are you interested in an improved or alternate project? Speak to the State and FEMA representatives before construction begins.
- Are any of the damaged facilities insured? Have you filed a claim with your insurance company?

Documentation for Category F can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs of damage and any repairs made
- Damage survey reports
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or materials purchased
- Stock pricing for any materials used from stock
- Maintenance records/bridge inspection reports
- Drawings, sketches, or engineering plans
- Insurance policy

### **Category G - Parks, Recreational and Other**

Are the damaged facilities your legal responsibility to repair and/or maintain?

Did you incur any increased operating expenses?

Have surveys been conducted for known and unknown damages?

Was the facility shut down? Were temporary services/facilities established?

Was force account equipment/labor used?

Did you use any rental equipment?

Was any work performed through a contract? How was the contract procured?

- Be sure to follow all local, State, and Federal procurement policies when entering into a contract

Did you provide or receive mutual aid from another locality? Was there a written mutual aid agreement in place prior to the event?

What materials and how much of each was used? Were materials from stock or purchased new for disaster repairs?

For all work completed, labor/equipment hours, materials, GPS coordinates, photos, and dimensions of the damage area will be needed for each site. Having these elements organized prior to meeting with your FEMA representative will save time.

Do you have maintenance records from prior to the event?

- If facilities were poorly maintained prior to the event, or if no maintenance records are available, reimbursement may be limited.

- Have your or will you repair the damages above and beyond their pre-disaster condition?  
This is considered hazard mitigation and some items can be funded. See FEMA mitigation policy 9526.1 for details.
- Are you interested in an improved or alternate project? Speak to the State and FEMA representatives before construction begins.  
Are any of the damaged facilities insured? Have you filed a claim with your insurance company?

Documentation for Category G can include, but is not limited to:

- Photographs of damage and any repairs made
- Damage survey reports
- Timesheets for force account labor
- Pay policy stating in what cases force account employees receive overtime and at what rate
- Equipment inventory lists and log book or other tracking system of hours used
- All contractor invoices
- Documentation on how any contracts were procured (pre-existing contract before the event, bidding, emergency waiver for procurement, etc.)
- Receipts for rental equipment or materials purchased
- Stock pricing for any materials used from stock
- Maintenance records/bridge inspection reports
- Drawings, sketches, or engineering plans
- Insurance policy