

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Emergency Programs

Part 905: Disaster Assistance

Chapter 1: Policy, Functions, and Responsibilities

Originating Office: Office of Law Enforcement and Security

905 DM 1

1.1 **Purpose.** This Chapter prescribes Departmental policy, functions, and responsibilities for disaster assistance preparedness activities and operations.

1.2 Definitions.

A. A **major disaster** means any hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, drought, fire, explosion, or other catastrophe in any part of the United States which, in the determination of the President, causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance by the Federal Government to supplement the efforts and resources of State and local governments and relief organizations.

B. An **emergency** means any hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, drought, fire, explosion, or other catastrophe in any part of the United States which requires Federal emergency assistance to supplement State and local efforts to save lives and lessen the threat of disaster.

1.3 Authorities.

A. Public Law 93-288 dated May 24, 1974 - The Disaster Relief Act of 1974.

B. Executive Order 12148 dated July 20, 1979 - Federal Emergency Management.

1.4 **Disaster Declaration.** All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected state. Following a determination by the President that a major disaster exists, the Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), may delegate or assign to the head of any agency of the executive branch of the Government the task of employing its resources in support of State and local government disaster assistance efforts. The Director, FEMA, has delegated the responsibility for providing Federal disaster assistance under the Act to the Associate Director, Disaster Response and Recovery (DRR).

1.5 **Policy.** In a major disaster or emergency declared by the President, all elements of the Department will provide equipment, supplies, facilities, personnel, and other resources, if requested by the Director or Regional Director of FEMA, or the Associate Director or a Regional Associate Director of DRR.

1.6 **Organizations.** The organizational arrangements for the Disaster Assistance Program of the Department are described in 190 DM 1.3B.

1.7 **Functions and Responsibilities.** In the event of a major disaster which involves, or appears likely to involve, either a request for substantial assistance from the Department or extensive damage to property or facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department, the Secretary of the Interior should be notified and kept constantly informed of the situation.

A. At Secretarial Level.

(1) Assistant Secretary - Policy, Budget and Administration has been designated the Departmental representative for Disaster Assistance (295 DM 1.3A). He/she ensures that the necessary measures are taken to respond to major disasters and other emergency situations affecting the Department. Measures necessary to achieve and maintain this capability are spelled out in the Act. The Assistant Secretary - Policy, Budget, and Administration should be notified immediately of any major emergency situation affecting the Department. The notification should contain a brief outline of the nature and scope of the emergency, damage to property or emergency assistance requested, and an estimated cost to the Department.

(2) Other Assistant Secretaries. Each Assistant Secretary, with bureau and/or field organizations, is authorized to comply with official requests for Federal disaster assistance (295 DM 1.3B). To ensure that the necessary measures are taken to respond to major disasters and other emergency situations, the delegated authority conferred by 295 DM 1.3B should be delegated to bureau heads and/or field officials.

(3) Heads of Bureaus and Offices. Each head of a bureau and office delegated disaster assistance authority under 295 DM 1.5 should assure that their organization is prepared to provide maximum assistance in an emergency situation.

B. At Field Level.

(1) Departmental Defense Liaison Officer (DDLO). A DDLO is designated in each of the standard Federal regions by the Secretary (see 295 DM 1.3C). He/she will act as a focal point for disaster assistance in his/her region. The DDLO will represent the Department at meetings during an emergency situation, collect information, keep appropriate officials of the Department (at headquarters and in the region) informed of current developments, and coordinate the regional emergency actions of the Department. The DDLO has no supervisory responsibility with respect to planning for emergency/disaster situations or furnishing assistance in his/her region, other than the liaison functions described above.

(2) Bureau Defense Liaison Officers (BDLO). A BDLO is assigned by each bureau to provide liaison between the regional DDLO(s), and bureau activities in the region. In the context of his/her bureau assignments, the functions of a BDLO are similar to those of a DDLO.

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