



FEMA

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## LESSON LEARNED

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### Disaster and Emergency Declarations: Establishing Procedures for Informing Affected Localities

#### SUMMARY

State emergency operations centers (SEOC) should establish standard operating procedures (SOP) to ensure that localities are notified when their jurisdictions are included in a disaster or emergency declaration.

#### DESCRIPTION

During the summer of 2008, the state of Iowa experienced a series of severe storms that produced several tornadoes and a large amount of rainfall. The heaviest period of storms began on May 25, 2008, and lasted until June 25. Rains caused flooding that overtopped levees and dams and inundated Iowa localities near rivers. Over a 4-week period, flood waters moved across Iowa, which required the state to undertake simultaneous preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery operations. Overall, the 2008 summer storms resulted in 17 fatalities, forced the evacuation of approximately 38,000 Iowans, and impacted over 21,000 housing units.

President George W. Bush and Iowa Governor Chet Culver issued disaster declarations that enabled assistance to be provided to the affected localities. Eighty-six of the ninety-nine counties in the state were included in the governor's disaster declarations. On May 27, President Bush issued a Major Disaster Declaration for Butler County (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]-1763-DR); this declaration was subsequently modified to include other counties. Ultimately, FEMA-1763-DR made residents in 84 counties eligible for public assistance and in 78 counties for individual assistance. By October 2008, FEMA had provided over \$400 million in assistance to Iowans.

The 2008 storms were comparable to the 1993 floods as the most destructive natural disasters in Iowa's history.

The Iowa SEOC did not possess an established SOP for notifying a county that it had been included in a federal or state disaster declaration. Consequently, some county emergency managers first learned that their counties had been covered by a disaster declaration through media inquiries. The 2008 summer storms after-action report recommended that the Iowa SEOC should establish SOPs to ensure that localities are notified when their jurisdictions are included in a disaster or emergency declaration.

SEOCs should establish SOPs to ensure that localities are notified when their jurisdictions are included in a disaster or emergency declaration.

#### CITATION

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. *Iowa 2008 Summer Storms After-Action Report*. 27 Apr 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=36042>

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