

REFERENCE GUIDE

Initial Damage Reporting & Disaster Declarations



A guide for municipal emergency management coordinators, Emergency Management staff, elected officials, and public works employees to assist with preparing and submitting disaster declarations and initial damage reports

Lehigh County Emergency Management

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters can strike at any moment, no matter what time of day, day of the week, or weather conditions that are present. Because of this, it is important that the municipal emergency management coordinator (EMC), his staff and the municipal employees and elected officials know what to do when a disaster affects your municipality.

The purpose of this document is to explain the duties and responsibilities of the EMC and the elected officials in the response to a situation which damage occurs in your municipality. This document provides guidance on the components of the Initial Damage Reporting (IDR) Process in addition to the process of declaring a local disaster in the municipality.

Significant portions of the document have been taken from publications issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). More information on obtaining a copy of these documents can be found by accessing FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov>.

Any questions regarding this document, its applicability, or the processes surrounding the IDR should be directed to the Lehigh County Emergency Management.

WHAT IS INITIAL DAMAGE REPORTING?

When a disaster of any magnitude has caused individual and/or public property damage, the damage reporting process should be initiated immediately under the direction of the municipal emergency management coordinator (EMC). The EMC may be occupied in the response to the emergency; therefore, another individual should be pre-designated and trained to coordinate the initial damage reporting and damage assessment process. Personnel, such as tax assessors, building inspectors, code enforcement officers, real estate appraisers, insurance adjusters, utility personnel, etc. have the expertise to become an integral part of your community's damage assessment team.

The process of initial damage reporting begins by evaluating the municipality via vehicle and documenting the number of damages found and categorizing them according to the property type and severity of damage. This documentation is in the form of a chart, which can be found in the appendix of this manual. It is also recommended that the person doing the initial damage report should document the locations of the damaged areas on a municipal map. Photographs of damages should be taken and kept on file. Once the information is compiled, the initial damage report is sent to the County Emergency Management who in turn submits it to PEMA for their records. The entire IDR process should take no more than two business days, so that the information can be compiled by PEMA in a timely manner.

The need for an initial damage report is not only to identify if a disaster declaration is needed, but also to identify any unmet needs, the impact the disaster had on the community, and to identify existing resources that need to be allocated.

When a disaster such as a hurricane, tornado, or major fire occurs in a municipality, the incident is handled by the local emergency response agencies. If the disaster situation is beyond the capabilities of the municipality, this creates certain unmet needs, which should be brought to the attention of the County Emergency Management. Supplemental assistance from the county may provide sufficient aid to return your community to normalcy.



The initial damage reporting process will also identify the impact the disaster had on the community. For instance, by evaluating the community, the EMC will be able to determine how many private properties, roads, bridges; utilities, etc. have been impacted.

DAMAGE REPORTING CATEGORIES & CLASSIFICATION

Before completing the Initial Damage Report, it is critical to become familiar with the various different reporting categories and property types. Having a precursory knowledge of this information will make the task of completing the information easier and more accurate.

The Initial Damage Report form is broken down into two types of property, private and public. The private property category is for buildings such as businesses, mobile homes, and single-family or multi-family residences only. Any other type of property that is damaged is documented under the public property category. A comprehensive list of the public and private property that needs to be reported is found below.

Once the determination has been made as to the type of property, the damage assessment team must

Private Property	Business, mobile, multi-family & single-family homes
Public Property	Bridges, culverts, Fire & EMS stations, hospitals, nursing homes, parks, utility services, public buildings, roads, sewers, schools, water and sewer treatment facilities, storm sewers.

determine the extent of damage that has been sustained. The following categories have been defined to classify the extent of damage. If the damage assessment team is unsure on the category of damage, it is better to **err** on the side of caution. If the damage being assessed is the result of flooding, use the following guidance to determine the proper damage category.

Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some shingles and/or siding missing ● Ingress/Egress to residence may be hampered ● Dwelling IS livable without repairs ● Stone driveway is washed away due to heavy rains
Damaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Property is usable, however repairs may be required ● Critical components of the facility are inoperable ● Sewer treatment is offline due to inoperable pumps
Destroyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Property no longer there ● Property is structurally unsafe ● All major structural systems are damaged and habitation is not possible
Inaccessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unable to access property ● Bridge out leading to property
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large portions of roof missing ● Structure or property cannot be used until repairs are made ● IE: Roof blown off due to high winds
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Property is damaged, but usable ● Numerous broken windows ● Minor Structural damage ● Roofing shingles blown off due to high winds

In addition to documenting the damage sustained by the municipality, it is also important that a thorough account is kept of emergency protective and debris removal measures. During incidents where a presidential disaster declaration has occurred, reimbursement may also be available to municipalities and/or emergency services agencies who committed their resources to assist in emergency operation related to the incident or to cleanup from the incident. Some examples of emergency protective measures include any of the following.

- Barricades placed to limit access;
- Fire Department personnel who evacuated residents; or
- Fire Department rescued victim from stalled vehicles in flood waters.

When documenting emergency protective measures, it is critical to provide a description of the tasks, including the location, the number of personnel who performed the task, the number of hours that the service was performed, and any equipment used.

Debris removal activities involve those where public property has been affected by the incident and the municipality has taken actions to remove debris from the property to restore it to pre-disaster conditions. Some examples of debris removal measures include any of the following:

- Downed trees and mud removal from park or other public property; or
- Storm debris removed from under bridge or culvert.

If any emergency protective or debris removal measures have taken place, it is critical that the individual complete the Initial Damage Report, communicate with the other disciplines in their municipality and obtain the necessary information and include this with the report. A form with the required information is included at the end of this manual.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE TYPES

When a disaster strikes, it can take several days, weeks, months or even years to recover from the effects and to rebuild damaged property. One way that this process is made easier is through the individual and public assistance process. It is important to note however, that the only time any of these programs can be implemented is after a disaster declaration at the state level. **Even if your local municipality or county declares a state of disaster, this does not enable these programs to be utilized.**

Individual Disaster Assistance

The Individual Assistance Program (IAP) provides money and services to people in the disaster area when losses are not covered by insurance and property has been damaged or destroyed. There are some limitations to the program that should be known.

Limitations to the IAP Program

- IAP is not intended to restore your damaged property to its condition before the disaster. In some cases, it may only provide enough money, up to the program limits, for you to return an item to service.
- IAP does not cover business-related losses that resulted from the disaster.
- By law, IAP cannot provide money to you for losses that are covered by your Insurance.
- While some money is available through IAP, most disaster aid from the Federal government is in the form of loans from the Small Business Association (SBA) that must be repaid. Applicants to IAP may be required to seek help from SBA first, before being considered for certain types of IAP help.

The IAP Program provides different types of assistance depending on the situation. The following list shows the types of assistance that are available through IAP and what each provides.

Temporary Housing (a place to live for a limited period of time): Money is available to rent a different place to live, or a government provided housing unit when rental properties are not available.

Repair: Money is available to homeowners to repair damage from the disaster that is not covered by insurance. The goal is to make the damaged home safe, sanitary, and functional.

Replacement: Money is available to homeowners to replace their home destroyed in the disaster that

is not covered by insurance. The goal is to help the homeowner with the cost of replacing their destroyed home.

Permanent Housing Construction: Direct assistance or money for the construction of a home. This type of help occurs only in insular areas or remote locations specified by FEMA, where no other type of housing assistance is possible.

Other Needs: Money is available for necessary expenses and serious needs caused by the disaster. This includes medical, dental, funeral, personal property, transportation, moving and storage, and other expenses that are authorized by law.

Unfortunately Individual Assistance is not available in every situation when a disaster or incident occurs. In order for individuals to be eligible to receive assistance, the following criteria must be met.

- You have losses in an area that has been declared a disaster area by the President;
- You have filed for insurance benefits and the damage to your property is not covered by your insurance;
- You or someone who lives with you is a citizen of the United States, a non-citizen national, or a qualified alien;
- The home in the disaster area is where you usually live and where you were living at the time of the disaster; and
- You are not able to live in your home now, you cannot get to your home due to the disaster, or your home requires repairs because of damage from the disaster.

Now that the IAP program has been defined and the eligibility characteristics have been explained, we will look at the various types of eligible losses that can be reimbursed under the program. It is important to note however that the IAP program **only covers repair or replacement of items that are damaged as a direct result of the disaster that are not covered by insurance. Repairs or rebuilding may not improve your home above its pre-disaster condition unless such improvements are required by current building codes.**

Housing Needs: Money to repair your home is limited to making your home safe and sanitary so you can live there. You may use your money provided for housing needs to repair:

- Structural parts of your home (foundation, outside walls, roof);
- Windows, doors, floors, walls, ceilings, cabinetry;
- Septic or sewage system;
- Well or other water system;
- Heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system;
- Utilities (electrical, plumbing, and gas systems);
- Entrance and exit ways from your home, including privately owned access roads; or
- Blocking, leveling, and anchoring of a mobile home and reconnecting or resetting its sewer, water, electrical and fuel lines, and tanks.

Other Housing Needs: Money to repair damaged personal property or to pay for disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs is limited to items or services that help prevent or overcome a disaster-related hardship, injury, or adverse condition. As stated above, the IAP program will NOT pay to return or replace your personal property to its condition before the disaster. You may use your money provided for other housing needs to repair or pay for:

- Disaster-related medical and dental costs;
- Disaster-related funeral and burial costs;
- Clothing; household items (room furnishings, appliances); tools (specialized or protective clothing and equipment) required for your job; necessary educational materials (computers, school books, supplies);
- Fuels for primary heat source (heating oil, gas, firewood);
- Clean-up items (wet/dry vacuum, air purifier, and dehumidifier);
- Disaster damaged vehicle;
- Moving and storage expenses related to the disaster (moving and storing property to avoid additional disaster damage while disaster-related repairs are being made to the home); or
- Other necessary expenses or serious needs as determined by FEMA.

Public Disaster Assistance

The Public Assistance Program provides supplemental Federal disaster grant assistance for the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and the facilities of certain Private Non-Profit (PNP) organizations. The Federal share of assistance is not less than 75% of the eligible cost for emergency measures and permanent restoration. The state will determine how the non-Federal share (up to 25%) is split with the applicants.

Within the public assistance program, there are several eligibility requirements for the applicants. The following list provides a detailed list of those organizations that are eligible to apply for assistance under this program.

- States, local governments, Indian tribes and PNP organizations
- Facilities must be open to the public and perform essential services of a governmental nature.
- Eligible PNP facilities generally include the following:
 - Medical facilities, such as hospitals, outpatient and rehabilitation facilities;
 - Custodial care facilities that provide institutional care for persons who require close supervision and some physical constraints in their daily activities;
 - Educational facilities, such as primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities;
 - Emergency facilities, such as fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance services;
 - Utilities, such as water, sewer, and electrical power systems; Museums, zoos, community centers, libraries, homeless shelters, senior citizen centers, shelter and facilities which provide health and safety services of a governmental nature. Similar to the Individual Assistance Program, only certain types of work are eligible to be reimbursed under the Public Assistance Process. To be eligible, the work must be required as the result of the disaster, be located within the designated disaster area, and be the legal responsibility of an eligible applicant. Work that is eligible for supplemental Federal disaster grant assistance is classified as either emergency work or permanent work.
- Emergency Work
 - Debris removal from public roads and rights-of-way as well as from private property when determined to be in the public interest.
 - Emergency protective measures performed to eliminate or reduce immediate threats to the public, including search and rescue, warning of hazards, and demolition of unsafe structures.

- Permanent Work
 - Work to restore an eligible damaged facility to its pre-disaster design. Work may range from minor repairs to replacement.
 - Categories of permanent work include:
 - Roads, bridges and associated features, such as shoulders, ditches, culverts, lighting and signs;
 - Water control facilities including drainage channels, pumping facilities, and the emergency repair of levees;
 - Buildings including their contents and systems;
 - Utility distribution systems, such as water treatment and delivery systems, power generation facilities and distribution lines, and sewage collection and treatment facilities;
 - Public parks, recreational facilities and other facilities, including playgrounds, swimming pools and cemeteries.

A significant portion of the information contained in this chapter was obtained directly from the FEMA publication “Help after a Disaster – Applicant’s Guide to the Individuals & Household Program” and also the FEMA Website. Additional information on the various types of assistance can be found on FEMA’s website at <http://www.fema.gov>.

DISASTER DECLARATION

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the first level of emergency response begins with the local municipality. These local governments along with the county and state share the responsibility for protecting the citizens from disasters, and for helping them to recover when a disaster strikes. In some cases, a disaster is beyond the capabilities of the State and local government to respond to.

In 1988, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act was enacted to support state and local governments and their citizens when disasters overwhelm them. This law, as amended, establishes a process for requesting and obtaining a Presidential disaster declaration, defines the type and scope of assistance available from the Federal government, and sets the conditions for obtaining that assistance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is tasked with coordinating this response.

The Stafford Act requires that: “All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected state.” Although the Governor must make the request, it is important to understand the importance of declaring a disaster at the local level if the need arises.

The process of declaring a disaster at the municipal level involves several steps. If it is decided by the elected officials of the municipality that a disaster declaration needs to be established, the following document needs to be completed and signed by the appropriated officials.

DECLARATION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, on or about date a (disaster) has caused or threatens to cause injury, damage, and suffering to the persons and property of name of municipality; and

WHEREAS, the (disaster) has endangered the health, safety and welfare of a substantial number of persons residing in name of municipality, and threatens to create problems greater in scope than name of municipality may be able to resolve; and

WHEREAS, emergency management measures are required to reduce the severity of this disaster and to protect the health, safety and welfare of affected residents in name of municipality:

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the undersigned Commissioners/Supervisors/Mayor of name of municipality, pursuant to the provisions of Section 7501 of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code, (35 PA C.S., Section 7501), as amended, do hereby proclaim the existence of a disaster emergency in name of municipality.

FURTHER, we direct the name of municipality Emergency Management Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the emergency response, to take all appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of this disaster, to aid in the restoration of essential public services, and to take any other emergency response action deemed necessary to respond to this emergency.

STILL FURTHER, we authorize officials of name of municipality to act as necessary to meet the current demands of this emergency, namely: by the employment of temporary workers, by the rental of equipment, by the purchase of supplies and materials, and by entering into such contracts and agreements for the performance of public work as may be required to meet the emergency, all without regard to those time-consuming procedures and formalities normally prescribed by law, mandatory constitutional requirements excepted.

This Proclamation shall take effect immediately.

(COMMISSIONERS/SUPERVISORS/MAYOR/COUNCIL)

_____	_____
(Chairman/President/Mayor)	(member)

_____	_____
(Vice Chairman/President)	(member)

_____	_____
(Secretary)	(member)

Attest: _____ Date: _____

Once the disaster declaration document has been completed and signed, a copy of the form needs to be submitted to the County as soon as possible. Once it is completed, the following actions can be employed;

- Implement the use of the Emergency Operations Plan;
- Bypass the bidding process and the necessary contracts;
- Allow the employment of temporary workers; and
- Allow the municipality to engage in the rental of equipment and purchase needed supplies.

Although a disaster has been declared in your municipality, this does not necessarily mean that the residents will be able to receive financial assistance. In order for this to occur, a **PRESIDENTIAL** disaster declaration must occur.

The Governor's request for disaster assistance is made through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. State and Federal officials will then conduct a preliminary damage assessment to estimate the extent of the disaster and its impact on individuals and public facilities. This information is included in the Governor's request to show that the disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the local governments and that Federal assistance is necessary.

As part of the request, the Governor must take appropriate action under State law and direct execution of the State's emergency plan. The Governor shall furnish information on the nature and amount of State and local resources that have been or will be committed to alleviating the results of the disaster, provide an estimate of the amount and severity of damage and the impact on private and public sector, and provide an estimate of the type and amount of assistance needed under the Stafford Act. In addition, the Governor will need to certify that, for the current disaster, State and local government obligations and expenditures (of which State commitments must be a significant proportion) will comply with all applicable cost-sharing requirements.

Initial Damage Report Worksheet

Name of Event: _____ **Date:** _____

County: _____ **Municipality:** _____ **Time of Report:** _____

Disaster Declared: Yes/No **Date & Time:** _____ **EOC Activated: Full/Partial/None** **Time:** _____

Person Completing This Report: _____ **Phone No:** _____

<u><i>Casualties</i></u>	<u><i>Damages</i></u>					
	<u><i>IA</i></u>	<u><i>Destroyed</i></u>	<u><i>Major</i></u>	<u><i>Minor</i></u>	<u><i>Affected</i></u>	<u><i>Inaccessible</i></u>
Fatalities _____	Single Family	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Major Injuries _____	Multi-Family	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Minor Injuries _____	Mobile Homes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Missing _____	Businesses	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<u><i>Human Impact</i></u>	<u><i>PA</i></u>	<u><i>Destroyed</i></u>	<u><i>Major</i></u>	<u><i>Minor</i></u>		
Hospitals _____	Bridges & Culverts	_____	_____	_____		
No. Evacuated _____	Debris Removal	_____	_____	_____		
No. Sheltered _____	Emergency Protective Measures	_____	_____	_____		
No. Hospitalized _____	Fire/EMS Facility	_____	_____	_____		
	Hospital	_____	_____	_____		
	Nursing Home	_____	_____	_____		
<i>Comments:</i>	Other	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Park	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Power Supply	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Public Building	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Roads	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Sanitary Sewer	_____	_____	_____		
_____	School	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Sewer treatment	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Storm Sewer	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Water Control Facility	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Water Supply	_____	_____	_____		
_____	Water Treatment	_____	_____	_____		

(Map attached – and/or Addresses and/or GIS Coordinates)