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# National Preparedness: A Summary and Select Issues

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## National Preparedness: A Summary and Select Issues

The nation has faced challenges in the effort to respond to, and recover from, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Persistent challenges related to acquisition and delivery of diagnostic tests, production and management of personal protective equipment, and development and distribution of vaccines have introduced new questions about the state of national readiness, for pandemics as well as other emergencies more broadly.

This is not the first time the nation has evaluated its state of preparedness. In the wake of the response to Hurricane Katrina, Congress directed the President to develop a stronger system for building national preparedness for all types of emergencies and disasters. In February 2011, President Barack Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive 8, which established a National Preparedness Goal, System, and Report to provide the nation with a framework for organizing preparedness activities. The strategies set forth in this directive govern how the “whole community”—including individuals, families, communities, localities, tribal nations, territories, states, and federal agencies—can strengthen the security and resilience of the nation.

Through PPD-8, President Obama directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop the National Preparedness System. This responsibility was delegated to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which has since organized a systematic process for developing national preparedness. To account for the myriad of threats faced by stakeholders across the nation, the process employs an all-hazards, capabilities-based approach and is intended for use by the “whole community.” Preparedness is divided into five major mission areas—prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery—so that preparedness activities can be organized and integrated across the entire lifecycle of an incident.

The National Preparedness System outlines six major actions to develop preparedness. The process begins with (1) identifying and assessing risk to understand existing, potential, and perceived threats and hazards. The information generated by this analysis provides the foundation for the next several steps, which detail how this risk is managed: by (2) estimating the capabilities required to address it, (3) building and sustaining those capabilities, and (4) planning to deliver those capabilities. These steps ensure that preparedness stakeholder have the necessary plans, equipment, training, and organizations in place to execute critical activities. Next, the National Preparedness System describes a process for (5) validating capabilities, to ensure capabilities are working as intended. This cycle is intended to be one of continuous improvement, and therefore (6) reviewing and updating these efforts is critical to long-term success.

The National Preparedness System has guided the development of preparedness for the past decade. As Congress considers the state of domestic preparedness, how it is organized, designed, and implemented will be important to any attempts to amend it. This report provides this background, and also introduces possible considerations for strengthening the nation’s preparedness, including

- changes to assignment of federal responsibility for preparedness,
- potential codification of key planning documents,
- potential federalism challenges related to burdens placed on state and local governments,
- adjustments to the funding for preparedness grants, and
- modifications to the process by which FEMA detects and corrects preparedness gaps.

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## Introduction

Historically and legislatively, preparedness for disasters and emergencies is the responsibility of state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments. Over time, however, the federal government has taken a formal role in developing preparedness by providing targeted grants, developing national guidance, and participating in more responses. Landmark events, such as the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (9/11), Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, as well as the confluence of hurricanes, wildfires, and other climate-related events in 2017, all precipitated major legislation to adjust the way the nation prepares to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond, and recover from major incidents.

The events of 9/11 introduced questions about the nation’s ability to address domestic incidents. In addition to the legislative and executive actions taken to address the threat of terrorism, the general state of national preparedness was examined. In December of 2003, President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (HSPD-8), which established “policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.”<sup>1</sup> HSPD-8 was intended as a companion to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5), which enhanced the ability of the nation to manage domestic incidents by establishing a national incident management system.<sup>2</sup> Together, these orders represent the initial federal efforts to address the issue of national preparedness in the modern era.

Two years later, Hurricane Katrina came ashore and severely damaged the City of New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast. After a much-criticized response, both federal and state preparedness was found lacking.<sup>3</sup> Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA; P.L. 109-295),<sup>4</sup> which required the President to develop a national preparedness goal, as well as a system for achieving that goal.<sup>5</sup> In response to this mandate, President Barack Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness (PPD-8), evolving from and superseding HSPD-8. PPD-8 defined the National Preparedness Goal (NPG) as well as the organizing plan for federal preparedness efforts: the National Preparedness System (NPS). This report summarizes the NPG and the NPS, as well as some of their key elements. It also briefly discusses policy options and considerations for Congress, including issues related to establishing the National Planning Frameworks (NPFs) in statute and addressing gaps in the nation’s preparedness capabilities.

### Glossary of Abbreviations

<b>AAR</b>	After Action Report
<b>DHS</b>	Department of Homeland Security
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>NIMS</b>	National Incident Management System

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<sup>1</sup> White House, “Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5,” February 28, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030228-9.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Congress, House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *A Failure of Initiative*, Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina Report, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., February 15, 2006, pp. 109-337.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. 109-295.

<sup>5</sup> 6 U.S.C. §§743-744.

<b>NLE</b>	National Level Exercise
<b>NPF</b>	National Planning Frameworks
<b>NPG</b>	National Preparedness Goal
<b>NPR</b>	National Preparedness Report
<b>NPS</b>	National Preparedness System
<b>PPD-8</b>	Presidential Policy Directive 8
<b>SPR</b>	Stakeholder Preparedness Review
<b>THIRA</b>	Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

## National Preparedness Goal and System

The National Preparedness System is intended to “ensure the Nation’s ability to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.”<sup>6</sup> The National Preparedness System, along with the National Preparedness Goal, is statutorily required by PKEMRA and assigns responsibility for development of the National Preparedness Goal and National Preparedness System to the President.<sup>7</sup> On March 30, 2011, President Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) to address this mandate after a decade-long review of national preparedness, which began in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.<sup>8</sup> PPD-8 required a National Preparedness Goal and assigned its development to the Secretary of Homeland Security.<sup>9</sup> The current National Preparedness Goal is

A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.<sup>10</sup>

To achieve this goal, the President also outlined the requirements for the National Preparedness System, to

help guide the domestic efforts of all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and the public to build and sustain the capabilities outlined in the national preparedness goal. The national preparedness system shall include guidance for planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercises to build and maintain domestic capabilities. It shall provide an all-of-Nation approach for building and sustaining a cycle of preparedness activities over time.<sup>11</sup>

The current approach for building and sustaining the cycle of preparedness involves six major activities, as detailed in **Figure 1**.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Section 642 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA, P.L. 109-295), 6 U.S.C. §742.

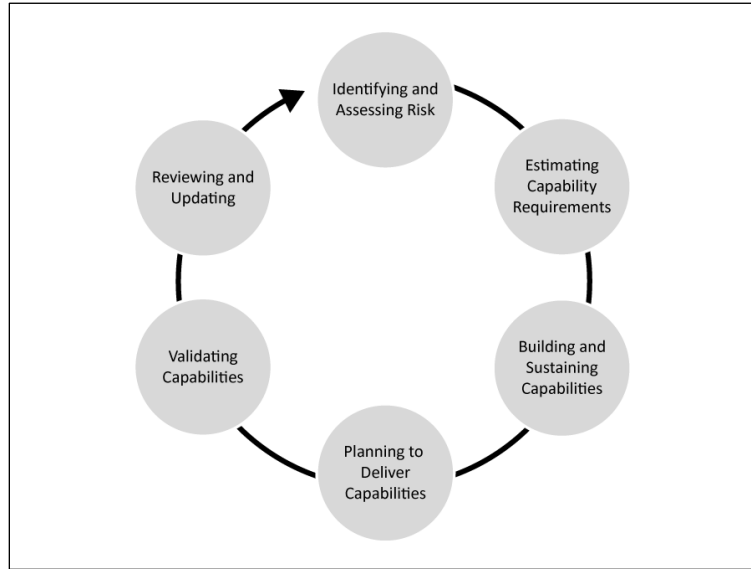
<sup>8</sup> White House, “PPD-8: Announcing the National Preparedness Goal,” October 7, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/10/07/ppd-8-announcing-national-preparedness-goal>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Preparedness Goal*, <https://www.fema.gov/national-preparedness-goal>.

<sup>11</sup> White House, “PPD-8: Announcing the National Preparedness Goal,” October 7, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/10/07/ppd-8-announcing-national-preparedness-goal>.

**Figure 1. Six Parts of the National Preparedness System**



**Source:** CRS interpretation of the process described by U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Preparedness System*, available at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/system>.

The approach is intended to apply to the full range of preparedness stakeholders, including individuals, families, communities, localities, tribes, states, territories, and federal entities.

The following sections describe the six parts of the NPS in detail:

1. Identifying and Assessing Risk;
2. Estimating Capability Requirements;
3. Building and Sustaining Capabilities;
4. Planning to Deliver Capabilities;
5. Validating Capabilities; and
6. Reviewing and Updating.

### What Is “Capability”?

“Capabilities” are the community-wide activities and tasks performed before, during, and after disasters. Examples include physical protective measures, fire management and suppression, mass care services, and economic recovery. A full list is available in **Figure 2**.

## Identifying and Assessing Risk

Building preparedness begins by understanding what risks to prepare for and how to prepare for them. To support, standardize, and measure risk and the activities that manage risk, FEMA has developed a suite of assessment tools through its National Risk and Capability Assessment (NRCA) products.<sup>12</sup> The results of the assessments provide stakeholders with data to make targeted investments in preparedness, by either reducing risk or developing capability. Further, when taken together, the results also inform a broader understanding of national risk, capabilities,

<sup>12</sup> NCRA’s “Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 201, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition” and other tools are available at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/risk-capability-assessment>.

and gaps. Such analysis is presented annually in the National Preparedness Report, which is discussed later in this report.

## **Risk Identification**

Since 2012, the NRCA has provided stakeholders with a standardized methodology for assessing risk through its Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) guidance. In 2018, this guidance was further standardized so that community data can be better compared, analyzed, and integrated at the national level to provide a more comprehensive understanding of national preparedness. Additionally, completion of the assessment by state, local, territorial and tribal governments is a requirement for some federal grants, including the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program, and the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program.<sup>13</sup>

FEMA conducts a National THIRA. This assessment was last completed in 2019 and the results

describe the level of capability that the Nation—including government, private, and non-profit sectors—would need to fully manage the Nation’s threats and hazards of greatest concern while concurrently engaging in response and recovery efforts for ongoing disasters.<sup>14</sup>

Through this process, FEMA identified major earthquakes, pandemics and biological attacks, detonation of improvised nuclear devices, and space weather as incidents that would stress national capabilities.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, systemic and emerging risks were also identified, including cybersecurity, unmanned aerial systems, and electromagnetic pulses.<sup>16</sup>

## **Capability Assessment**

After identifying apparent risks and the capabilities needed to meet them, current levels of capability are assessed through the Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) process. The NRCA toolkit describes the process as

a self-assessment of a jurisdiction’s current capability levels against the targets identified in the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA). Using the targets from the THIRA, jurisdictions identify their current capability and how that capability changed over the last year, including capabilities lost, sustained, and built.<sup>17</sup>

Stakeholders can use this data to identify gaps between existing and needed capabilities and make decisions about investments in preparedness. The information collected in this process may be used to support budget request justifications, make staffing decisions, or inform grant applications. Identifying risk and assessing capability form the basis for the remaining steps in the National Preparedness System.

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<sup>13</sup> More information on the requirements of these grants can be found in FEMA’s Preparedness Grants Manual, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/fema\\_preparedness-grants-manual.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/fema_preparedness-grants-manual.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *2019 National Preparedness Report*, p. 18, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_2020-national-preparedness-report.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_2020-national-preparedness-report.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-26.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Risk and Capability Assessment*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/risk-capability-assessment>.



## Estimating Capability Requirements

The National Preparedness System emphasizes capability-based planning—developing and maintaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities to address threats and hazards, in lieu of preparing for every potential scenario. After pertinent risks are identified, capabilities are selected to address those risks. Some capabilities may already exist; others may need to be developed to address apparent gaps. For instance, to address the threat of hurricanes, a community may need to develop its *Critical Transportation* capability to support potential evacuations. The community would need to develop a capability target, or a level at which they need to develop that activity to address the risk. Capability may exist within current systems and resources (i.e., the community may have transportation resources to evacuate 20% of its population); however, if that measurement falls short of the target, then a gap may need to be addressed.

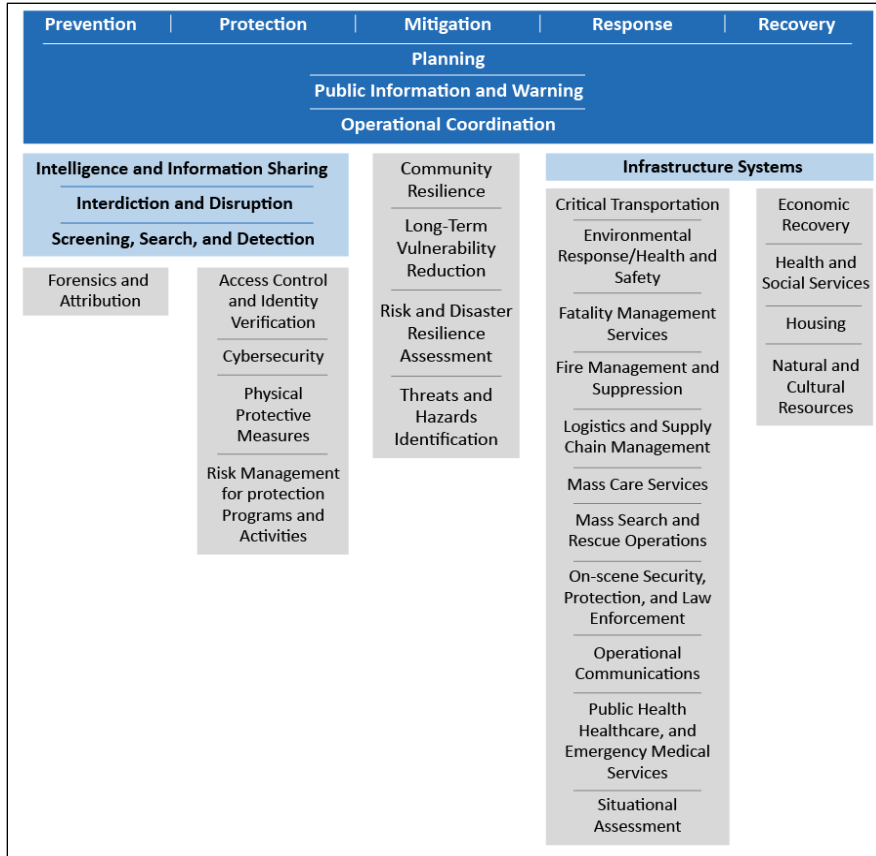
## Core Capabilities and Mission Areas

The National Preparedness System identifies 32 “core” capabilities, or distinct critical activities, needed to achieve the National Preparedness Goal.<sup>18</sup> These activities are performed before, during, and after disasters to reduce risk, save lives, and recover from incidents. Capabilities are intended to be built and sustained by all preparedness stakeholders through planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise. The full list of capabilities is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Core Capabilities*, <https://www.fema.gov/core-capabilities>.

**Figure 2. Core Capabilities**



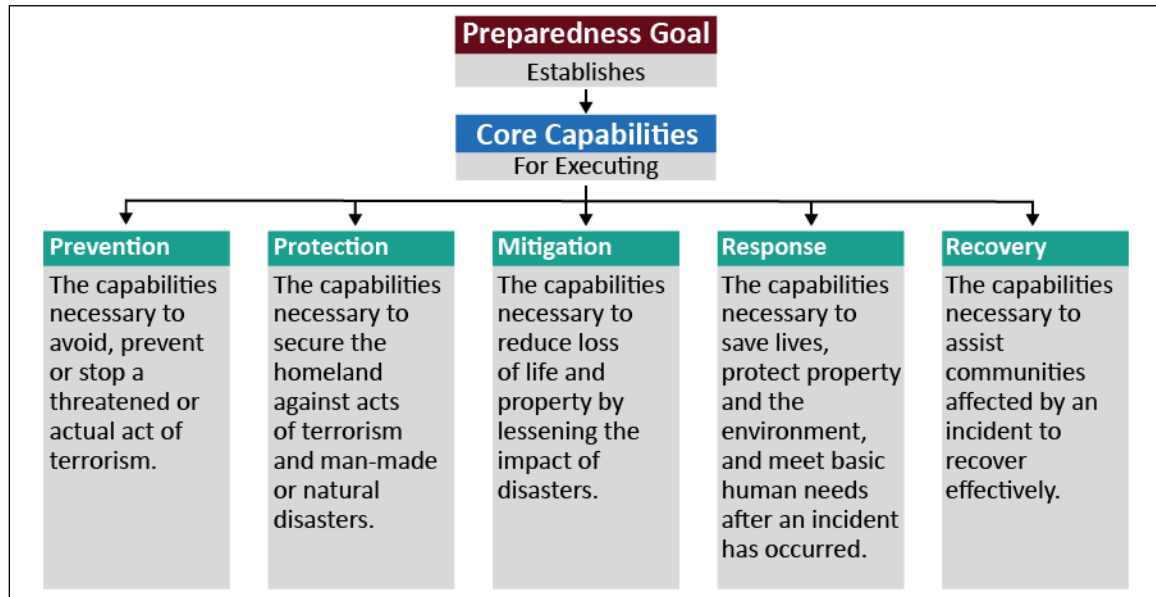
**Source:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, available at <https://emilms.fema.gov/ISO363/groups/15.html>.

To provide a coordinated framework for organizing the development and delivery of these activities, the 32 core capabilities are grouped into five mission areas. Grouping capabilities into mission areas ensures that related activities are integrated and provides efficiencies when planning, organizing, equipping, training, and exercising critical tasks, as illustrated by **Figure 3**. The five missions outlined in the National Preparedness Goal are

- Prevention—prevent, avoid, or stop an imminent, threatened, or actual act of terrorism;
- Protection—protect U.S. citizens, residents, visitors, and assets against the greatest threats and hazards in a manner that allows national interests, aspirations, and way of life to thrive;
- Mitigation—reduce the loss of life and property by lessening the impact of future disasters;
- Response—respond quickly to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs in the aftermath of a catastrophic incident; and
- Recovery—recover through a focus on the timely restoration, strengthening and revitalization of infrastructure, housing, and a sustainable economy, as well as the

health, social, cultural, historic, and environmental fabric of our communities affected by a catastrophic incident.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 3. Mission Areas of the National Preparedness Goal**



**Source:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, available at <https://emilms.fema.gov/ISO120c/groups/28.html>.

The 32 core capabilities outlined by the National Preparedness Goal represent the critical competencies needed to address all types of emergencies, from local incidents addressed with local resources to national disasters involving presidential declarations under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §§5121 et seq., hereinafter referred to as the Stafford Act) and a federal response.<sup>20</sup>

Neither the mission areas nor the capabilities are the exclusive responsibility of any one government agency or organization. Instead, they call for the combined efforts of the “whole community,” including individuals and families, nonprofit and religious organizations, private sector companies, schools, media outlets, as well as state, local territorial and tribal governments and federal partners.

## Building and Sustaining Capabilities

Preparedness stakeholders are challenged to prioritize resources to develop the capabilities they need most, either to address the highest probability or highest consequence threats. Whole community partners, including state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, are encouraged to enhance their capabilities through planning, equipping, training, and other preparedness activities. To support these activities, several agencies administer suites of grants and technical assistance

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Preparedness Goal*, <https://www.fema.gov/national-preparedness-goal>.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on responding to and recovering from major disasters, see CRS Report R41981, *Congressional Primer on Responding to and Recovering from Major Disasters and Emergencies*, by Bruce R. Lindsay and Elizabeth M. Webster.

programs. Most of these programs are administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) although the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and other agencies also have significant programs. Since 2002, DHS has provided over \$53 billion to grant recipients in support of capability development and the National Preparedness Goal.<sup>21</sup> A list of major preparedness grants can be found in **Appendix A**.

As aforementioned, the development of capability involves many stakeholders throughout the government and nongovernmental community. To ensure the successful delivery of these capabilities, FEMA has developed the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS provides the “shared vocabulary, systems and processes” necessary to ensure that prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery activities are coordinated and interoperable.<sup>22</sup> NIMS describes how to manage the resources delivering core capabilities, how to provide command and control of those resources, and how to communicate information about the activities of those resources. Key features of NIMS include the Incident Command System, guidelines for mutual aid, the National Qualification System, and resource typing.<sup>23</sup> Building and sustaining capabilities in accordance with the NIMS guidance ensures that the capability can be integrated with the efforts of partner agencies. Some federal agencies condition preparedness grants on the adoption of NIMS.

## Planning to Deliver Capabilities

The coordination of preparedness activities is set forth by the National Planning Frameworks (NPFs). These documents provide a methodology for engaging the whole community and synchronizing preparedness efforts. There is an NPF for each mission area: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Each describes the strategy and doctrine for delivering core capabilities.

### National Prevention Framework

The National Prevention Framework details how individuals and government agencies at the state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal levels should respond to information about imminent threats to the homeland. The framework offers guidance on how to interrupt, deter, avert, or otherwise prevent an act of terrorism by

- describing the core capabilities needed to prevent an imminent act of terrorism;
- aligning key roles and responsibilities to deliver prevention capabilities in time-sensitive situations;
- describing coordinating structures that enable all stakeholders to work together; and
- laying the foundation for operational coordination and planning that will synchronize prevention efforts with the whole community.

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Preparedness Grants*, <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness>.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Incident Management System*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims>.

<sup>23</sup> The Third Edition of the NIMS Doctrine (October 2017) is available at [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_nims\\_doctrine-2017.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_nims_doctrine-2017.pdf).

Departments or agencies, as well as private and nonprofit entities, with unique missions in Prevention, bring additional capabilities to bear through these structures. These structures function on multiple levels, to include national-level coordinating structures such as

- DHS National Operations Center (NOC);
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Strategic Information and Operations Center (SIOC);
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC);
- Department of Defense (DOD) National Military Command Center (NMCC); and
- FBI National Joint Terrorism Task Force (NJTTF).<sup>24</sup>

## **National Protection Framework**

The National Protection Framework describes how to safeguard and defend against incidents and disasters that may be unpreventable. The framework provides guidance on developing protection at all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individuals by

- describing the core capabilities needed to achieve the protection mission area and end-state of “creating conditions for a safer, more secure, and more resilient Nation”;
- aligning key roles and responsibilities to deliver protection capabilities;
- describing coordinating structures that enable all stakeholders to work together; and
- laying the foundation for further operational coordination and planning that will synchronize protection efforts within the whole community and across the prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery mission areas.

In the context of the National Protection Framework, the coordinating structures described within the document support protection program implementation and are meant to enhance the nation’s security. The National Protection Framework structures also address common vulnerabilities, align resources, and promote the delivery of protection capabilities.<sup>25</sup>

## **National Mitigation Framework**

FEMA states that the National Mitigation Framework establishes a common platform and forum for coordinating and addressing how the nation manages risk through mitigation and lessening the impact of disasters. The framework is intended to increase risk awareness and leverage mitigation services and assets across the whole community. The coordinating structures for mitigation

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<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *The National Prevention Framework*, pp. 2-3, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National\\_Prevention\\_Framework2nd-june2016.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National_Prevention_Framework2nd-june2016.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *The National Protection Framework*, pp. 4-5, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National\\_Protection\\_Framework2nd-june2016.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National_Protection_Framework2nd-june2016.pdf).

attempt to create a national culture shift that includes risk management and mitigation in planning, decisionmaking, and development.<sup>26</sup>

## National Response Framework

The National Response Framework (NRF) is a guide to how the nation may respond to all types of disasters and emergencies. The NRF identifies, aligns, and coordinates key roles and responsibilities across the nation and is intended to be scalable, flexible, and adaptable to any incident, from those managed with local resources to those that require marshaling of resources from across the nation. The capabilities described in the NRF detail what activities need to be performed to save lives, protect property and the environment, meet basic human needs, stabilize the incident, restore basic services and community functionality, and establish a safe and secure environment moving towards the transition to recovery.<sup>27</sup>

Both the NRF and NIMS provide guidance on the coordination of emergency response activities for the whole community. As the national standard for incident management, NIMS provides the guidelines for operations and response activities. The NRF provides the structure for response policy development and implementation.

## Federal Authority for Response

While the NRF emphasizes that incident response should be managed at the lowest jurisdictional level capable of handling the mission, some incidents merit federal involvement.<sup>28</sup> Depending on the size and type of the incident, responsibility for government action during an emergency can lie with a number of federal agencies as designated by express or implied agency authority. For these types of incidents, the agency with jurisdiction is designated the “lead agency.” However, President George W. Bush’s Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) identifies the Secretary of Homeland Security as “the principal Federal official for domestic incident management.”<sup>29</sup> Generally, a federal agency can coordinate federal activities for emergency response according to their statutory authorities until one or more of the criteria set forth by HSPD-5 are met:

- (1) a Federal department or agency acting under its own authority has requested the assistance of the Secretary of Homeland Security;
- (2) the resources of State and local authorities are overwhelmed and Federal assistance has been requested by the appropriate State and local authorities;
- (3) more than one Federal department or agency has become substantially involved in responding to the incident; or

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *The National Mitigation Framework*, p. 5, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National\\_Mitigation\\_Framework2nd\\_june2016.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/National_Mitigation_Framework2nd_june2016.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> As with all activities in support of the NPG, activities taken under the response mission must be consistent with all pertinent statutes and policies, particularly those involving privacy and civil and human rights, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Civil Rights Act of 1964.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Overview of the National Planning Frameworks*, Washington, DC, June 2016, pp. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> White House, “Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5,” February 28, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030228-9.html>.

(4) the Secretary of Homeland Security has been directed to assume responsibility for managing the domestic incident by the President.<sup>30</sup>

If the President chooses to declare an emergency or major disaster under the Stafford Act, some coordination responsibilities may be delegated to the FEMA Administrator.<sup>31</sup> The Stafford Act authorizes the President, through the FEMA Administrator, to provide financial and other assistance to state, local, territorial and tribal governments, certain private nonprofit organizations, and individuals to support response, recovery, and mitigation efforts following a Stafford Act emergency or major disaster declaration.<sup>32</sup>

## Coordination of Federal Activities

The federal government organizes its capabilities and resources for emergency response according to the “emergency support function” (ESF) construct. Each of the 15 ESFs is composed of a federal department or agency designated as the coordinator, along with additional primary and support agencies. Assignments to these roles are based on authority, available resources, and existing capabilities. Full descriptions of the ESFs are available in **Appendix B**.

Activation of ESFs, or the departments and agencies that support them, is done in accordance with the demands of the incident. Depending on the authority being invoked to manage the federal response, either FEMA or the lead agency for the incident can make these activations. Federal personnel and resources may be assigned at the incident, regional, or headquarters levels. Additionally, FEMA may issue mission assignments to obtain resources and services from federal departments and agencies.<sup>33</sup> The activities of the ESFs are coordinated at the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), the multiagency coordination center responsible for the overall federal support for major disasters and emergencies. FEMA personnel as well as private sector and nongovernmental organization representatives support the NRCC.

## Deployable Federal Assets

Congress has authorized and appropriated a suite of deployable federal assets to support domestic disaster response operations. A deployable federal asset generally refers to a set of specially trained federal employees whose mission is to provide on-scene assistance to communities by supporting their disaster response, such as Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs—administered by the Department of Health and Human Services), Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs—administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency), and the 249<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Prime Power—administered by the Department of Defense). Typically, these assets only provide assistance at the request of states or tribes and in

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Pursuant to DHS Delegation 9000.1, the DHS Secretary delegated to the FEMA Administrator the authority to perform the functions assigned to the Secretary of Homeland Security in Executive Order 12148, as revoked in part and amended by Section 1 of Executive Order 12673 and Section 52 of Executive Order 13286 of February 28, 2003, relating to FEMA.

<sup>32</sup> These authorities may be exercised independently of, concurrently with, or become part of a federal response coordinated by the Secretary of Homeland Security pursuant to presidential directive. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, Washington, DC, October 28, 2019, p. 44, [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1582825590194-2f000855d442fc3c9f18547d1468990d/NRF\\_FINALApproved\\_508\\_2011028v1040.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1582825590194-2f000855d442fc3c9f18547d1468990d/NRF_FINALApproved_508_2011028v1040.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Through the Stafford Act and in accordance with 6 U.S.C. §§741(4) and 753(c).

circumstances where the capabilities of nonfederal government entities are overwhelmed and a state governor or the chief executive of a tribe requests assistance.<sup>34</sup>

Responsibility for these deployable assets lies with several different agencies and given this diversity, there are many legal authorities and executive branch policies that govern their use in response operations.<sup>35</sup> Some primary federal policies guiding the use of deployable federal assets include the NRF and accompanying Federal Interagency Operational Plan (FIOP), NIMS, and the Defense Support for Civilian Authorities (DSCA).<sup>36</sup>

## **National Disaster Recovery Framework**

The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) provides guidance for how the nation can prepare to recover from emergencies and disasters, particularly for incidents that are large-scale or catastrophic. It provides a structure that enables disaster recovery managers at the state, local, territorial and tribal levels to operate in a unified and collaborative manner.

The NDRF defines

- Core recovery principles;
- Roles and responsibilities of recovery coordinators and other stakeholders;
- A coordinating structure that facilitates communication and collaboration among all stakeholders;
- Guidance for pre- and post-disaster recovery planning; and
- The overall process by which communities can capitalize on opportunities to rebuild stronger, smarter, and safer.

The NDRF outlines the following roles and concepts:

- Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC);
- State or Tribal Disaster Recovery Coordinators (SDRC or TDRC);
- Local Disaster Recovery Managers (LDRM); and
- Recovery Support Functions (RSF).

The coordinators and managers facilitate the incorporation of recovery considerations into the decisionmaking process, and monitor the need for adjustments in assistance where necessary and feasible throughout the recovery process.

Additionally, the Recovery Support Functions operate similarly to the NRF's Emergency Support Function, and provide a coordinating structure that facilitates problem solving, improves access to resources, and fosters coordination among state and federal agencies, nongovernmental partners, and stakeholders. Each RSF has coordinating and primary federal agencies and supporting

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<sup>34</sup> For more information on requests for federal assistance, see CRS Report R43784, *FEMA's Disaster Declaration Process: A Primer*, by Bruce R. Lindsay.

<sup>35</sup> Some of the most notable authorities are the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §§5121 et seq.), Title XXVIII of the Public Health Service Act, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. §§101 et seq.), and the Posse Comitatus Act (18 U.S.C. §§1385 et seq.).

<sup>36</sup> More information on these assets is available in CRS Report R43560, *Deployable Federal Assets Supporting Domestic Disaster Response Operations: Summary and Considerations for Congress*, coordinated by Jared T. Brown.



organizations that operate together with local, state, and tribal government officials, NGOs, and private sector partners.

## Federal Interagency Operational Plans

Each of the NPFs are supported by a “federal interagency operational plan” (FIOP) that describes how the federal government (rather than the whole community) aligns its resources to deliver core capabilities.<sup>37</sup> The operational plans for protection, mitigation, response, and recovery are publicly available; the operational plan for prevention is not available on unclassified systems due to national security concerns. The response and recovery FIOPs are also supported by incident-specific annexes to provide additional detail on how disasters like power outages, mass evacuation, and cyberattacks should be managed. The plans also provide the guidelines by which federal departments and agencies develop and maintain their own operational plans.

## Review of the Planning Frameworks

The National Planning Frameworks are intended to be living documents. Lead departments and agencies, as designated in each framework, coordinate and oversee the review and maintenance process for each NPF. The revision process may include developing or updating any documents necessary to promote a unity of effort to build, sustain, and deliver the core capabilities essential to achieving the NPG. The review process is expected to accomplish the following:

- assess and update information on the core capabilities;
- account for changes in organization and responsibility;
- ensure integration and consistency across the mission areas;
- update processes based on changes in the national risk landscape; and
- reflect progress in the nation’s activities associated with each mission area, the need to execute new laws, executive orders, and presidential directives, as well as strategic changes to national priorities and guidance, critical tasks, or national capabilities.

The review is intended to capture best practices and lessons learned from both exercises and real world incidents, as well as pertinent new processes and technologies.<sup>38</sup> The frequency of required updates is not prescribed in statute.

## Validating Capabilities

After capabilities are developed and planned for, they are validated through exercise. Exercises provide a low-risk, cost-effective means to test plans, policies, and procedures and identify gaps, areas for improvement, and best practices.

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Federal Interagency Operational Plans*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/federal-interagency-operational-plans>.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Overview of the National Planning Frameworks*, Washington, DC, June 2016, p. 9.

## The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

To ensure that emergency exercises are conducted systematically, FEMA has developed a set of guidelines to structure their design, development, conduct, and evaluation under the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).<sup>39</sup> The guidance includes methodologies for assessing capability performance, identifying areas for improvement, and recommending corrective actions in an After-Action Report and Improvement Plan. Through this process, stakeholder agencies can improve their capabilities and plans, thereby closing preparedness gaps.

### National Level Exercises

Within PKEMRA, Congress mandated that

the Administrator [of FEMA] shall periodically, but not less than biennially, perform national exercises ... to test and evaluate the capability of Federal, State, Local and Tribal governments to detect, disrupt and prevent threatened or actual catastrophic acts of terrorism, especially those involving weapons of mass destruction,” and “to test and evaluate the readiness of Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to respond and recover in a coordinated and unified manner to catastrophic incidents.<sup>40</sup>

To meet this requirement, FEMA has implemented a two-year cycle of exercises across the nation to validate capabilities in all mission areas. These “National Level Exercises” (NLEs) alternate between addressing natural disasters and malicious adversaries. The selection of scenarios and objectives are guided by the National Security Council’s Principals Committee’s strategic priorities.<sup>41</sup>

The 2018 NLE focused on a mid-Atlantic hurricane and exercised the whole community’s ability to take pre-landfall protective actions, plan for simultaneous response and recovery, and identify the effects of sustained power outages.<sup>42</sup> The 2020 NLE was intended to focus on cybersecurity; however, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA Administrator Gaynor made the decision to cancel the exercise to ensure FEMA’s resources remained dedicated to pandemic response and recovery activities.<sup>43</sup> Informational webinars, a preparedness seminar, and a facilitated discussion between senior federal officials were conducted to satisfy the legislative mandate.

The 2022 NLE is to focus on a catastrophic earthquake along the Cascadia Subduction Zone in the Pacific Northwest. This exercise is to build off the 2016 NLE “Cascadia Rising” and is to be designed to validate planning and capability improvements made in the intervening years.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The complete HSEEP doctrine is available at <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> 6 U.S.C. §748(b)(3).

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Level Exercise Background*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/planning-exercises/nle/background>.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Previous National Level Exercises*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/planning-exercises/nle/previous>.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Level Exercise 2020*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/planning-exercises/nle/2020>.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Level Exercise 2022*, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/planning-exercises/nle/2022>.

## Reviewing and Updating

FEMA acknowledges the importance of regular review of capabilities, resources, and plans and encourages the constant evolution of preparedness. Continuous improvement is mentioned across many of FEMA's core documents to emphasize adaptation to changing threat landscapes and capability profiles. There is no official guidance for conducting After-Action Reports (AARs) for real-life incidents.

## National Preparedness Report

As mandated by PPD-8 and consistent with PKEMRA, FEMA produces an annual report that assesses national progress towards the National Preparedness Goal. This “National Preparedness Report” (NPR) provides high-level descriptions of national risks and key threats as well as analysis of capability targets and evaluation of progress towards preparedness goals. The 2020 NPR reviewed preparedness data gathered in 2019 and provided specific analysis on cascading impacts from disasters, housing, vulnerable populations, and public-private partnerships.<sup>45</sup> The 2021 NPR may explore the capability gaps exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Issues and Policy Considerations

A number of policy issues relevant to the National Preparedness System continue to be matters of congressional debate. Especially as the nation faces challenges in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress may consider the ways in which preparedness can be strengthened.

## Assignment of Federal Responsibilities

Congress may review the leadership responsibilities for national preparedness dictated by PPD-8 policies. President Obama directed the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, to lead the development of the National Preparedness Goal and System. This delegation of leadership is an important distinction as it diverges from the language of PKEMRA, which directed the President to develop the Goal and System by acting through the Administrator of FEMA. Congress may review the impact of this decision on the mission of FEMA and DHS as it relates to the fulfillment of PKEMRA. Congress may also evaluate the assignment of lead agency and coordination roles to federal departments and agencies outlined in the National Planning Frameworks. Further, while the NPFs may attempt to coordinate and de-conflict the authorities and resources, they may potentially do so in a manner that does not meet the priorities and preferences of Congress.

## Codifying and Reporting on the National Planning Frameworks

The National Preparedness System and National Preparedness Goal are codified at 6 U.S.C §§742-744. No other components of the NPS are established by law. NIMS and the NRF are

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<sup>45</sup> The 2020 National Preparedness Report is available at Department of Homeland Security, *2020 National Preparedness Report*, 2020, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_2020-national-preparedness-report.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_2020-national-preparedness-report.pdf).

identified in 6 U.S.C. §744 in conjunction with the NPG. Congress may seek to establish in statute the National Planning Frameworks.

Alternatively, Congress may require DHS to report on changes made to any NPF. For example, a proposed amendment to a version of the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act would have required the FEMA Administrator to report to Congress on “all changes that have been made to any part of the National Response Framework” not later than 180 days after the enactment, and report quarterly (starting January 1, 2021) to Congress all changes made to the NRF and Emergency Support Functions.<sup>46</sup> This would inform Congress; DHS; state, local, territorial, and tribal governments; and homeland security stakeholders of changes to the NPFs generally, and the NRF specifically. The statute currently does not include the scope or details of the NPS.

Changes to NPFs affect how all levels of government (and their private and public sector partners) prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against incidents, emergencies, and disasters. Currently, DHS states that it reviews the NPFs every four years to evaluate consistency with existing and new policies, evolving conditions, and real-world applications.<sup>47</sup>

## Impacts on State and Local Governments and other Community Stakeholders

PPD-8 policies, such as the NPS, are not intended to place undue financial burden on state and local governments, the public and nonprofit sector, and private citizens. Congress may evaluate PPD-8 guidance for its effect on these entities, especially for its compliance with the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-4).<sup>48</sup> Further, Members of Congress may assess the effectiveness of the preparedness policies within their own districts and jurisdictions, and assess the overall preparedness level of their communities by reviewing state and local Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRAs) and Stakeholder Preparedness Reviews (SPRs). These documents are usually available through the state or tribal emergency management agency. The capabilities identified in the National Preparedness Goal can serve as a guide for the types of tasks each state and local government will be expected to deliver.

## Funding for Preparedness Grants

Given that Congress has appropriated funding for preparedness grants for over 20 years, Congress may evaluate its continued investment. Some might argue that since over \$53 billion has been appropriated for state and local homeland security and emergency preparedness, state and local jurisdictions should have developed the capabilities required to meet the National Preparedness Goal. The funding for preparedness grants has contracted several times in the past decade.<sup>49</sup> Congress may evaluate the need for continuation of federal support and consider whether to reduce or eliminate funding.

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<sup>46</sup> *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 117, p. S3585, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-166/senate-section/page/S3585>.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Overview of the National Planning Frameworks*, Washington, DC, June 2016, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> For more information on the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act, see CRS Report R40957, *Unfunded Mandates Reform Act: History, Impact, and Issues*, by Robert Jay Dilger.

<sup>49</sup> See CRS Report R44669, *Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Grants: A Summary and Issues*, by Shawn Reese.

Congress may consider reducing funding to a level that ensures states and localities are able to maintain their existing capabilities, but not fund new development. Additionally, some may argue that states and localities should assume more responsibility for funding their preparedness, and that the federal government should reduce their investment. Whether states and localities can support this change may depend on their financial condition.

Alternately, Congress may choose to maintain present funding levels. Given the changing risk landscape, and the presentation of novel threats such as terrorism and emerging infectious diseases, preparedness stakeholders may need to continue to evolve new capacity as well as capability. Some may also argue that funding amounts should be increased due to potential increases in the number and intensity of natural disasters and their costs.<sup>50</sup>

## Addressing Identified Gaps in National Preparedness

In May 2020, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified actions necessary to address shortcomings in the nation's emergency management capabilities.<sup>51</sup> GAO stated that FEMA has yet to determine what steps are needed to address capability gaps at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial levels. The GAO report recommends that FEMA strengthen its after-action review process, and specifically states that FEMA has not developed guidance to assist regional officials in prioritizing which disasters should result in an AAR.<sup>52</sup> GAO states that FEMA headquarters lacks a formal mechanism to document and track best practices, lessons learned, and corrective actions identified through AARs, and lacks guidance on sharing AAR findings with stakeholders.<sup>53</sup> GAO also concludes that FEMA has taken steps to strengthen national preparedness but has not fully identified capability gaps and determined what actions are needed to enhance national preparedness capabilities.<sup>54</sup> To address these issues, GAO recommends the following:

Following the completion of the 2021 National Preparedness Report, determine what steps are needed to address the nation's emergency management capability gaps across all levels of government and inform key stakeholders, such as the Office of Management and Budget and Congress, about what level of resources will be necessary to address the known gaps.<sup>55</sup>

Develop guidance to help determine which AARs should be prioritized based on factors such as the severity of disasters and availability of staff and resources to conduct the review, and implement time frames for following up on incomplete AARs.

Develop a mechanism to consistently track best practices, lessons learned, and corrective actions that have been elevated to headquarters for resolution.

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<sup>50</sup> For additional considerations regarding preparedness grants, including measurements of effectiveness, see CRS Report R44669, *Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Grants: A Summary and Issues*, by Shawn Reese.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *National Preparedness: Additional Actions Needed to Address Gaps in the Nation's Emergency Management Capabilities*, GAO-20-297, 2020, <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-20-297>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> In the DHS response to GAO's report, FEMA stated that it does not believe that the cost of national resource gaps can be estimated without first accounting for existing federal capabilities, which will be incorporated into the 2021 National Preparedness Report. The collection of necessary information was scheduled to begin in 2020, but was delayed due to the response operations for the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, GAO's recommendation has been updated to reflect the updated timeframe following the publication of the 2021 National Preparedness Report.

Develop guidance on sharing AARs and their relevant findings with external stakeholders, when appropriate.<sup>56</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The state of national preparedness has been called into focus in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Preparedness System provides a framework for iteration and improvement over time, especially as lessons are learned from both exercises and real-world events. Preparedness gaps will continue to be identified by federal and state, local, territorial, and tribal partners through After-Action Reports and analysis of Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments and Stakeholder Preparedness Reviews; by Congress through hearings and reports; and by academic research. Congress may consider providing financial, human, and technical resources to communities, governments, and agencies looking to bolster their readiness. More systematically, Congress may also consider mechanisms to strengthen the development of preparedness to ensure the National Preparedness Goal can be met.

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<sup>56</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *National Preparedness: Additional Actions Needed to Address Gaps in the Nation's Emergency Management Capabilities*, GAO-20-297, 2020, p. 39.

## Appendix A. Select Preparedness Grants

Several agencies administer grants intended to develop preparedness, either explicitly or implicitly. The grants identified in the table support preparedness activities in some or all of the mission areas. For more information on the preparedness grants administered by DHS, see CRS Report R44669, *Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Grants: A Summary and Issues*, by Shawn Reese.

**Table A-1. Major Preparedness Grants**

Grant Program	Description	Administering Agency
Assistance to Firefighters Grants	Three grant programs focused on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters in fire-related hazards.	DHS
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)	Supports hazard mitigation projects to reduce risks from disasters and natural hazards. BRIC replaces the FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program.	DHS/FEMA
Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)	Enhancing and sustaining all-hazards emergency management capabilities.	DHS/FEMA
Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)	Preventing, preparing for, protecting against and responding to acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP)	Establishes a foundation for national health care preparedness.	HHS/Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
Intercity Bus Security Grant	Protecting private operators of intercity over-the-road bus transportation systems from acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
Intercity Passenger Rail Grant—Amtrak	Protecting Amtrak rail system from acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Grant	Funding to support the establishment of earthquake hazards reduction programming and implementation of earthquake safety, mitigation, and resilience activities at the local level.	DHS
Nonprofit Security Grant	Funds physical security enhancements and activities for nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack.	DHS/FEMA
Operation Stonegarden (OPSG)	Provides funding to enhance cooperation and coordination among state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal law enforcement agencies to jointly enhance security along the United States land and water borders.	DHS

Grant Program	Description	Administering Agency
Port Security Grant	Protecting ports from acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
Presidential Residence Security Assistance Grant	Reimbursements to state and local law enforcement agencies for costs incurred while protecting any nongovernmental residence of the President being secured by the United States Secret Service	DHS/U.S. Secret Service
Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Grant Program	Build and strengthen the abilities of state, local, and territorial health departments to effectively respond to a range of public health threats, including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events.	HHS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program	Funding for local governments to encourage innovative regional solutions catastrophic incidents.	DHS
Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP)	Support for Tribal Nations in preventing, preparing for, protecting against, and responding to acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
Transit Security Grant	Protecting critical public transportation systems (intra-city bus, ferries, and all forms of passenger rail) from acts of terrorism.	DHS/FEMA
Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)	Provides funding to enhance regional preparedness and capabilities in designated high-threat, high-density areas.	DHS

**Source:** <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness>

**Notes:** This table is not comprehensive, and does not provide information on grant programs outside of the Department of Homeland Security, with the exception of those available through the Department of Health and Human Services. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, grant and cooperative agreement programs to support public health and medical services were included.



## Appendix B. NRF's Emergency Support Functions

The National Response Framework's Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) are not the responsibility of a single agency or department, and the support functions are not mechanisms for executing an agency's statutory authorities. Instead, ESFs group the capabilities of federal entities and their assets. ESFs are designed to support a number of core response capabilities. Federal ESF coordinators oversee the response activities for a particular ESF, and coordinate with its primary and support agencies.<sup>57</sup>

ESF primary agencies are responsible for the following:

- orchestrating support and strategy development within their functional area for the appropriate response core capabilities and other ESF missions;
- notifying and requesting assistance from support agencies;
- managing mission assignments (in Stafford Act incidents), and coordinating with support agencies, as well as appropriate state officials, operations centers, and other stakeholders;
- coordinating resources resulting from mission assignments;
- working with all types of organizations, including nongovernmental organizations, to maximize use of resources;
- monitoring progress in delivering core capability and other ESF missions, and providing that information as part of situational and periodic readiness or preparedness assessments;
- planning for incident management, short-term recovery operations, and transition to long-term recovery support operations;
- maintaining trained personnel to support interagency emergency response and support teams;
- identifying new equipment or capabilities required to prevent or respond to emerging threats and hazards or to validate and improve capabilities to address evolving risks; and
- promoting physical accessibility, programmatic inclusion, and effective communication for the whole community, including individuals with disabilities and those with access and functional needs.<sup>58</sup>

ESF support agencies have specific capabilities, resources, and assets that support primary federal entities in executing an ESF mission. These support agencies' activities typically include the following:

- planning for incident management, short-term recovery operations, transition to long-term recovery support operations, and the development of supporting operational plans and standard operating procedures;
- providing input to periodic preparedness assessments;
- maintaining trained personnel to support interagency emergency response and support teams;

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

- identifying new equipment or capabilities required to respond to emerging threats and hazards or to improve the ability to address existing threats; and
- coordinating resources resulting from response mission assignments.<sup>59</sup>

**Table B-1** summarizes the federal ESFs and describes their function in terms of core capabilities associated with response. All ESFs support the common core capabilities of operational coordination, planning, and public information and warning.

**Table B-1. Emergency Support Functions and ESF Coordinators**

ESF	Coordinator	Function
1-Transportation	Department of Transportation	Coordinates support for the management of transportation systems and infrastructure, the regulation of transportation, management of the nation's airspace, and ensures the safety and security of the national transportation system.
2-Communications	Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency	Coordinates government and industry efforts for the reestablishment and provisioning of critical communications infrastructure and services, facilitates the stabilization of systems and applications from malicious activity, and coordinates communications support to response efforts.
3-Public Works and Engineering	Department of Defense Army Corps of Engineers	Coordinates the capabilities and resources to facilitate the delivery of services, technical assistance, engineering expertise, construction management, and other support to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster or other incident.
4-Firefighting	Department of Agriculture U.S. Fire Administration	Coordinates support for the detection and suppression of fires. Functions include but are not limited to supporting wildland, rural, and urban firefighting operations.
5-Information and Planning	Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Supports and facilitates multiagency planning and coordination for operations involving incidents requiring federal coordination.
6-Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Temporary Housing, and Human Services	Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Coordinates the delivery of mass care and emergency assistance.
7-Logistics	General Services Administration Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Coordinates comprehensive incident resource planning, management, and sustainment capability to meet the needs of disaster survivors and responders.
8-Public Health and Medical Services	Department of Health and Human Services	Coordinates the mechanisms for assistance in response to an actual or potential public health and medical disaster or incident.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

ESF	Coordinator	Function
9-Search and Rescue	Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Coordinates the rapid deployment of search and rescue resources to provide specialized life-saving assistance.
10-Oil and Hazardous Material Response	Environmental Protection Agency	Coordinates support in response to an actual or potential discharge or release of oil or hazardous materials.
11-Agriculture and Natural Resources	Department of Agriculture	Coordinates a variety of functions designed to protect the nation's food supply, respond to pest and disease incidents affecting agriculture, and protect natural and cultural resources.
12-Energy	Department of Energy	Facilitates the reestablishment of damaged energy systems and components, and provides technical expertise during an incident involving radiological/nuclear materials.
13-Public Safety and Security	Department of Justice Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	Coordinates the integration of public safety and security capabilities and resources to support the full range of incident management activities.
14-Cross-Sector Business and Infrastructure	Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency	Coordinates cross-sector operations with infrastructure owners and operators, businesses, and their government partners, with particular focus on actions taken by businesses and infrastructure owners and operators in one sector to assist other sectors to better prevent or mitigate cascading failures between them.
15-External Affairs	Department of Homeland Security	Coordinates the release of accurate, coordinated, timely, and accessible public information to affected audiences, including the government, media, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. Works closely with state and local officials to ensure outreach to the whole community.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, Washington, DC, October 28, 2019, pp. 39-41.

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