

II. Planning Assumptions & Considerations

The NRP is based on the planning assumptions and considerations presented in this section.

- Incidents are typically managed at the lowest possible geographic, organizational, and jurisdictional level.
- Incident management activities will be initiated and conducted using the principles contained in the NIMS.
- The combined expertise and capabilities of government at all levels, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations will be required to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from Incidents of National Significance.
- Incidents of National Significance require the Secretary of Homeland Security to coordinate operations and/or resources, and may:
 - Occur at any time with little or no warning in the context of a general or specific threat or hazard;
 - Require significant information-sharing at the unclassified and classified levels across multiple jurisdictions and between the public and private sectors;
 - Involve single or multiple geographic areas;
 - Have significant international impact and/or require significant international information-sharing, resource coordination, and/or assistance;
 - Span the spectrum of incident management to include prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery;
 - Involve multiple, highly varied hazards or threats on a local, regional, or national scale;
 - Result in numerous casualties; fatalities; displaced people; property loss; disruption of normal life-support systems, essential public services, and basic infrastructure; and significant damage to the environment;
 - Impact critical infrastructures across sectors;
 - Overwhelm capabilities of State, local, and tribal governments, and private-sector infrastructure owners and operators;
 - Attract a sizeable influx of independent, spontaneous volunteers and supplies;
 - Require extremely short-notice Federal asset coordination and response timelines; and
 - Require prolonged, sustained incident management operations and support activities.
- Top priorities for incident management are to:
 - Save lives and protect the health and safety of the public, responders, and recovery workers;
 - Ensure security of the homeland;
 - Prevent an imminent incident, including acts of terrorism, from occurring;
 - Protect and restore critical infrastructure and key resources;
 - Conduct law enforcement investigations to resolve the incident, apprehend the perpetrators, and collect and preserve evidence for prosecution and/or attribution;
 - Protect property and mitigate damages and impacts to individuals, communities, and the environment; and
 - Facilitate recovery of individuals, families, businesses, governments, and the environment.
- Deployment of resources and incident management actions during an actual or potential terrorist incident are conducted in coordination with the Department of Justice (DOJ).
- Departments and agencies at all levels of government and certain NGOs, such as the American Red Cross, may be required to deploy to Incidents of National Significance on short notice to provide timely and effective mutual aid and/or intergovernmental assistance.
- The degree of Federal involvement in incident operations depends largely upon specific Federal authority or jurisdiction. Other factors that may be considered include:
 - The State, local, or tribal needs and/or requests for external support, or ability to manage the incident;
 - The economic ability of the affected entity to recover from the incident;
 - The type or location of the incident;
 - The severity and magnitude of the incident; and
 - The need to protect the public health or welfare or the environment.
- Federal departments and agencies support the homeland security mission in accordance with national authorities and guidance and are expected to provide:
 - Initial and/or ongoing response, when warranted, under their own authorities and funding;
 - Alert, notification, pre-positioning, and timely delivery of resources to enable the management of

potential and actual Incidents of National Significance; and

- Proactive support for catastrophic or potentially catastrophic incidents using protocols for expedited delivery of resources.
- For Incidents of National Significance that are Presidentially declared disasters or emergencies, Federal support to States is delivered in accordance with relevant provisions of the Stafford Act (see Appendix 3, Authorities and References). (Note that while all Presidentially declared disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act are considered Incidents of National Significance, not all Incidents of National Significance necessarily result in disaster or emergency declarations under the Stafford Act.)

Under provisions of the Stafford Act and applicable regulations:

- A Governor may request the President to declare a major disaster or emergency if the Governor finds that effective response to the event is beyond the combined response capabilities of the State and affected local governments. Based on the findings of a joint Federal-State-local Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) indicating the damages are of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant assistance under the act, the President may grant a major disaster or emergency declaration. (Note: In a particularly fast-moving or clearly devastating disaster, the PDA process may be deferred until after the declaration.)
- If the President determines that an emergency exists where the primary responsibility for response rests with the Government of the United States, or because the emergency involves an area or facility for which the Federal Government exercises exclusive or preeminent primary responsibility and authority, the President may unilaterally direct the provision of assistance under the act and will, if practicable, consult with the Governor of the State.
- DHS can use limited pre-declaration authorities to move initial response resources (critical goods typically needed in the immediate aftermath of a disaster such as food, water, emergency generators, etc.) closer to a potentially affected area.
- Federal assistance takes many forms—including the direct provision of goods and services, financial assistance (through insurance, grants, loans, and direct payments), and technical assistance—and can come from various sources.

- In a major disaster or emergency as defined in the Stafford Act, the President “may direct any Federal agency, with or without reimbursement, to utilize its authorities and the resources granted to it under Federal law (including personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, and managerial, technical, and advisory services) in support of State and local assistance efforts...” [sections 402(a)(1) and 502(a)(1) of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5170a(1) and § 5192(a)(1)].
- In an actual or potential Incident of National Significance that is not encompassed by the Stafford Act, the President may instruct a Federal department or agency, subject to any statutory limitations on the department or agency, to utilize the authorities and resources granted to it by Congress. In accordance with HSPD-5, Federal departments and agencies are expected to provide their full and prompt cooperation, available resources, and support, as appropriate and consistent with their own responsibilities for protecting national security.
- Federal-to-Federal support refers to the circumstance in which a Federal department or agency requests Federal resource support under the NRP that is not addressed by the Stafford Act or other mechanisms (e.g., Executive orders, MOUs, memorandums of agreement (MOAs), etc.).

This support:

- Is coordinated by DHS using the multiagency coordination structures established in the NRP and in accordance with the NIMS;
- Generally is funded by the Federal entity with primary responsibility and statutory authority for the incident in accordance with provisions of the Economy Act, 31 U.S.C. 1535, unless other statutory authorities exist;
- Is facilitated by the interagency MOU for Mutual Aid, and executed at the time of the incident through interagency agreements (see the Financial Management Support Annex for more information);
- May include support to incident operations at sites under the control of the Legislative or Judicial Branches of the Federal Government; and
- May be used to coordinate U.S. Government support in the event of an overseas incident, if recommended by the Department of State (DOS).