

Emergency Management Guide for Elected Officials

This guide will serve as a tool to help prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies of varying kinds. The goal of this guide is to help you understand and effectively manage and execute your role as an elected official of Los Alamos County during a disaster. From notification of the initial emergency situation to calls from the media, you will know what to do and how to accomplish keeping citizen's calm and informed. Once calls offering assistance begin you will know how to manage and organize entities including other governmental organizations, volunteers and donations.

The role of the elected official in the community is to lead. Assisting in disaster planning and preparedness aids the community by having responsibilities already clearly defined and trusted relationships built. Use this guide to help facilitate your planning and preparedness to ensure that response and recovery can be more efficient and successful.

How well a community recovers from a disaster largely depends on the steps taken before a disaster occurs. Emergency management revolves around five principles:

- Planning – Having plans in place for different elements (evacuation, sheltering) to maintain efficiency during a disaster.
- Preparedness – A continuous cycle of organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluation and improvement activities to ensure effective coordination and capabilities.
- Mitigation – Attempts to prevent hazards from developing into disasters, or to reduce the effects of disasters when they occur. Mitigation occurs throughout the five principles.
- Response – This is the mobilization of resources once a disaster occurs. First responders (fire and police) are usually first on-scene and will ask for additional resources.
- Recovery – The aim of the recovery phase is to restore the affected area to as near its previous state as possible. A goal of recovery should be to implement proper mitigation measures to avoid future problems.

These principles guide the decisions we make and how we operate. You can see most of the principles involve being proactive well before an emergency happens. Elected officials should consider having these principles play a role in how they lead and make decisions for our community.

Once a disaster occurs there are priorities, keep these in mind during an emergency:

1. Life Safety
2. Incident Stabilization
3. Conservation of property and the environment

Elected Officials Role

All disasters occur at the local level first. It is the local elected official's duty to provide leadership and policy guidance to their jurisdiction before, during and after a disaster. Local elected officials should engage in preparedness efforts, which are constantly ongoing and involve activities to prepare for disasters and emergencies, as well as aid in future response and recovery efforts.

The following sections will outline some roles and responsibilities of elected officials before, during and after a disaster:

Before a Disaster:

- Make planning and preparing for disasters a priority at all levels of your organization
- Meet with your emergency management team to learn about what hazards threaten this community and how they are being addressed
- Learn about emergency management and disaster assistance programs at the federal and state level before they are needed
- Provide policy direction for prevention/protection-related, response, recovery and mitigation-related activities
- Encourage all departments and businesses within your jurisdiction to coordinate and collaborate with your emergency management team
- Familiarize yourself with the Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) and visit the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). The EOP for the county is a very detailed guide to emergencies.
- Encourage the people in your community to develop an emergency plan and be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours during the immediate aftermath of a disaster
- Obtain the necessary training to be an efficient and effective leader during an emergency. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a strong base of basic knowledge
- Participate in disaster and emergency drills and full-scale exercises
- Learn about the damage assessment process and how it can impact obtaining federal assistance
- Learn your legal authorities, responsibilities and duties (see Authorities and References Annex)

During a Disaster:

- Support and work with your emergency management officials, as needed. This may include authorizing a local state of emergency, and issuing emergency orders
- Communicate quickly, clearly and effectively to your constituents and work with your partners to ensure a coordinated message
- Get accurate information out early and often, ensure that your message is accessible to all
- Work with the Public Information Officer (PIO) to ensure a unified message
- Refrain from letting political interests guide decision making
- Maintain situational awareness regarding the disaster by staying informed
- Trust and empower your County Manager, public safety and emergency management officials to make the right decisions
- DOCUMENT EVERYTHING!

After a Disaster:

- Understand how to obtain disaster assistance following a disaster and understand the limitations of it (see Disaster/Emergency Declaration Annex)
- Support your community throughout the recovery process. Recovery can take months or years to complete
- Help identify opportunities to build back better and mitigate future damage through mitigation planning and smart infrastructure investments
- Ask questions – the recovery and process programs can be complex
- Attend briefings by department heads and community meetings

Elected officials make decisions that should ensure the safety of their constituents, visitors, economies, environment and communities.

Information

Elected officials should be aware of all potential hazards within the community they serve. Following is a chart of hazards faced by this community, the significance, cascading events and primary impacts for Los Alamos County:

Hazard	Significance	Potential Cascading Hazards	Primary Impacts
Dam Failure	Medium	Flood; disease	Property damage; personal injury and death
Drought	Low	Wildfire; disease	Property damage; environmental impacts
Earthquake	Medium-High	Structure fire; hazardous materials; utilities loss	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Floods	Medium	Disease; utilities loss	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Landslide (Including Rockfall)	Medium	Transportation incident	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Wind	Low	Utilities loss	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Lightning	Medium	Wildfire; structure fire; utilities loss	Property damage; personal injury and death

Thunderstorm (Includes Hail/Monsoon)	Medium	Floods; flash floods	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Winter Storm/Severe Cold	Low	Utilities loss	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Wildfire	High	Utilities loss	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death
Volcano	Low	Wildfire; earthquake	Property damage; environmental impacts; personal injury and death

LANL potential hazards are:

- Aircraft crash
- Beyond design basis natural phenomena events
- Earthquakes/seismic events
- Medical emergencies
- Public Health Emergencies
- Radiological, biological, and hazardous material emergencies
- Security emergencies (malevolent acts, terrorism, active threat, explosive devices)
- Cyber-Attacks
- Severe weather emergencies including extreme straight line winds, tornados, and snow load
- Structural fires, explosions, etc.
- Wildland Fires

Los Alamos County utilizes multiple sources to disseminate information. When an emergency occurs notification will happen in the following manner:

1. The Consolidated Dispatch Center notifies the Chain of Command
2. Los Alamos County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) notifies the Situation Assessment Team (SAT), which includes the County Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Utilities Manager and the Public Works Director.
3. SAT verifies the information and notifies the county PIO, Los Alamos National Labs (LANL) and the County Council
4. The Emergency Operation Center is activated, or partially activated (situation dependent), at the Los Alamos Police Department or LANL

5. The Los Alamos County Joint Information Center (JIC) is established at either Bradbury Museum or the library
6. Los Alamos Customer Care will assist with non-emergency phone calls

Los Alamos County utilizes the following systems for communication:

- CodeRED Mobile Alert System – This system can be used to inform the general public of an ongoing situation and what steps to take during. The CodeRED application can also message specific groups (senior management, command staff) to alert them of the situation and notify them about where to report. Please download the CodeRED app from any of the major app stores and provide your contact information to the Office of Emergency Management
- AM1610 radio station – for local alerts and information during a disaster or emergency situation
- Los Alamos County's website – www.losalamosnm.us keeps updated information on the main page
- Los Alamos County also utilizes social media and the information is maintained through the county's Public Information Officer
- Know your local points of contact (POC) and keep their information available (See Contacts Annex)

Authorities and References Annex

- Charter for the County of Los Alamos, Article 1, Section 103, Home Rule Part 1 Charter Article II - To meet a public emergency affecting life. The County Council 203.3 Emergency Ordinances. Health, property, or the public peace, the Council may adopt emergency ordinances by the affirmative vote of five members.

- N.M. Constitution. Article X, §6D, (Municipal Home Rule)

- Emergency Management, NMSA 1978

- The New Mexico Civil Emergency Act of NMSA 1978, as Amended, Chapter 12-10-1 to 12-10-10

- Robert T. Stafford Act

- SARA Title III

- Homeland Security Act of 2002

- Disaster Mitigation Act of 2002

- PETS Act 2006

During a disaster declaration elected officials may need to exercise extraordinary powers, these include:

- Seizure of real or personal property
- Require qualified persons to render aid
- Control or prohibit travel in the area
- Restoration of essential services
- Declare evacuation

- Authorize entry without warrant
- Cause demolition
- Procure or fix prices
- Authorize conscription

Disaster/Emergency Declaration Annex

Incorporated County of Los Alamos

Disaster/Emergency Declaration

WHEREAS, Los Alamos County has suffered severe damage caused by (<<<Insert type of disaster>>>) on or about (<<<Insert beginning date>>>) and extending through (<<<Insert ending date>>>); and,

WHEREAS, extensive damage was caused to (<<<Insert description of damage to public sector>>>) and to (<<<Insert description of private sector damage>>>); and,

WHEREAS, this incident has resulted in undue human suffering and hardship and threatens the safety, health, welfare, and well-being of the citizens and local economy of Los Alamos County; and,

WHEREAS, all locally available public and private resources available to mitigate and alleviate the effects of this disaster have been insufficient to meet the needs of the situation, make repairs, and protect the public safety;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Harry Burgess, County Manager, by virtue of the authority provided by County Resolution 94-20 and by the New Mexico Civil Emergency Preparedness Act, NMSA 1978, 12-10-01 to 12-20-11, do hereby declare Los Alamos County an emergency/disaster area for the purpose of

exercising necessary emergency powers, for expending local resources, and for requesting aid, assistance, relief programs, and funding that may be available from the State of New Mexico.

DONE AT THE OFFICE of the County Manager this ____ day of ____, 201__.

County Manager

Attest:

Los Alamos County Clerk

Record:

(Book and Page, if Applicable)

Applying for Public Assistance

Assistance from the federal government is coordinated through the county emergency manager. Following a disaster the emergency manager will request a preliminary damage assessment for the county. This information will be added to the state request for federal disaster assistance. If a declaration is made, the emergency manager will contact you and provide a meeting date for a conference on how to make an application for funding. More information can be obtained through FEMA <http://www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema>. Also, the FEMA *Public Assistance Policy Digest* is available upon request from FEMA and is a good reference.

Public assistance must meet established thresholds for federal disaster assistance. There are also different categories of work.

- Category A: Debris removal. Clearance of debris on public lands or waters.
- Category B: Emergency protective measures. Measures to preserve life and property.
- Category C: Roads and Bridges. Repair or replacement of roads, streets and bridges.
- Category D: Water Control Facilities. Repair or replacement of dikes, levees, irrigation works and drainage facilities.
- Category E: Buildings and Equipment. Repair or replacement of public buildings and related equipment, including repairs and operating assistance to public elementary and secondary schools by the Department of Education.
- Category F: Utilities. Repair or replacement of public utilities.
- Category G: Parks and recreational facilities.

FEMA sets annual dollar thresholds of uninsured eligible damage to public facilities and certain private nonprofit organizations, based on population. The FEMA statewide threshold and county thresholds must BOTH be met in order for the Governor to request a presidential disaster declaration.

The FY16 amount for Los Alamos County is: \$64,082

The FY16 amount statewide is: \$2,903,442

Individual assistance to residence provides no specific thresholds, but federal regulations provide averages that are used by FEMA as guidelines. For New Mexico the averages are 173 homes with major damage or destroyed, resulting in approximately \$2.8 million in UNISURED housing assistance.

Documentation is a critical part aspect during an emergency or disaster. The county's ability to seek disaster funding depends on good documentation and should be near the top of your priority list as an elected official. To be successful in the funding request the county must be able to document every aspect of the emergency. Staffing (even volunteers), equipment, consumables, equipment rental, sheltering, etc. can all qualify for reimbursement at a certain percentage of the overall cost. The documentation must detail ALL efforts for response and recovery. In some cases it should document the need for future allocation of mitigation funds.

Another important aspect to qualify for public assistance is complying with the preparation and training requirements as described by FEMA and must be structured in accordance with the NIMS guidelines. Failure to do so could result in the county being denied part or all of the funding assistance that we would otherwise qualify for.

Useful Websites

Citizen Corps: <https://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps>

Medical Reserve Corps: <https://mrc.hhs.gov/HomePage>

Community Emergency Response Teams: <https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team>

Fire Corps: www.firecorps.org

National Neighborhood Watch: <http://www.nnw.org/usaonwatch>

American Red Cross NM: <http://www.redcross.org/local/az-nm-el-paso/chapter-locations/new-mexico>

Institute for Business and Home Safety: <https://disastersafety.org/>

National Emergency Management Association: <https://www.nemaweb.org/>

FEMA: www.fema.gov

U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security: www.ready.gov

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster: <https://www.nvoad.org/>

Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

Disaster Resource Guide: <http://www.disaster-resource.com/>

New Mexico Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management: <http://www.nmdhsem.org/>