

MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
MISSISSIPPI OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY



NEWS

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SUBJECT: The Preliminary Damage Assessment Process Fact Sheet

Today MEMA, FEMA and local emergency management officials are conducting preliminary damage assessments. These assessments are a first-hand, on-the-ground, survey by teams of federal, state and local emergency personnel to determine the type and amount of damage a disaster has inflicted on individuals and property.

Process/Timeline:

- The first response to a disaster happens at the local level. Within the community, the local emergency services organization works with nearby municipalities, local volunteer organizations, and the state
- When a governor decides that effective response to a disaster is beyond state capabilities, a request for aid is made to the appropriate FEMA regional office.
- FEMA disaster specialists join MEMA and local emergency management representatives to conduct a survey of the impacted area.
- These teams are staffed by specialists with extensive experience in:
 - **Public Assistance** -- inspecting structures, roads, water and sewer treatment facilities and other essential public facilities,
 - **Human Services** -- interviewing residents to determine the extent of the disaster on individuals and families, and
 - **Hazard Mitigation** -- determining possible future preventive actions as well as gauging the effectiveness of measures already in place.
- These joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) teams visit the scene and determine the extent of private and public damages and estimate the types and extent of federal disaster aid needed.
- A joint summary report of the damage assessment is prepared for the governor who can use the data as a basis for deciding whether to request a major disaster declaration from the President. The governor's request for a disaster declaration is sent to the President with a recommendation from FEMA.
- The President approves the request or FEMA informs the governor it has been denied.
- The decision timeline depends on many circumstances and can take several days depending on the nature of the disaster. If the request is denied, the governor can appeal the decision.
- There is no established formula to determine whether a state will be declared eligible for a major disaster declaration.

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