

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Fact Sheet

Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program

Federal Disaster Process

When a disaster threatens or occurs, local authorities take immediate steps to warn and evacuate citizens, alleviate suffering, and protect life and property. If additional help is needed, the Governor may direct execution of the state's emergency plan, use State Police or the National Guard, or commit other State resources as the situation demands.

Federal establishments, particularly military installations, which are located in or near the disaster area, may provide immediate lifesaving assistance, and voluntary organizations and other Federal agencies, operating under their own statutory authorities, may be able to provide assistance.

However, if the situation is beyond the capabilities of local and State forces, supplemented by limited assistance of Federal forces on the scene, the Governor may request the President declare a "major disaster" or an "emergency." This request must satisfy the provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended by Public Law 100-707 ("the Stafford Act").

A *major disaster* is defined as "any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought), or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion in any part of the United States, which in the determination of the President causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under this Act to supplement the efforts and available resources of States, local governments, and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused thereby."

An *emergency* is defined as "any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the President, Federal assistance is needed to supplement State and local efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the United States."

The President's disaster assistance program is designed to supplement the efforts and available resources of State and local governments, voluntary relief organizations, and other forms of assistance such as insurance. The President's declaration of a major disaster or an emergency authorizes Federal assistance under the Stafford Act and triggers other Federal disaster relief programs as well.

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