



FEMA

May 8, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: Regional Administrators  
Regions I – X

FROM: Keith Turi  
Assistant Administrator  
Recovery Directorate

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Turi".

SUBJECT: Release of the Updated *Preliminary Damage Assessment Guide*,  
Effective Date June 8, 2020

I am pleased to announce the publication of Recovery's update to the Damage Assessment Operations Manual from 2016, the ***Preliminary Damage Assessment Guide (PDA Guide)***. The attached PDA Guide, its supplemental PDA Pocket Guide, and an Overview of Major Updates to the PDA Guide have been published on FEMA.gov. **The PDA Guide will take effect on Monday, June 8, 2020.**

The purpose of the PDA Guide and its accompanying pocket guide is to define a standard, national-level framework for how state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and FEMA staff collect and validate the cause, location, and details of damage following a disaster. The PDA Guide was developed closely with input from PDA subject matter experts in each FEMA Region. Major updates include:

- Reorganization to be more operational;
- Updates to the Individual Assistance degrees of damage definitions;
- Elimination of soft costs from Public Assistance (PA) estimates;
- Inclusion of guidance on PA desktop assessments; and
- New Tribal-Specific Considerations Appendix

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, we have decided to give Regions a month from publication to review and socialize major changes with regional stakeholders before the new guidance takes effect on June 8, 2020. The new PDA Guide can be used immediately, but any PDAs that take place on or after June 8, 2020, must use the new guidance. For a list of the major changes to the guide, please see the attached Overview of Major Updates to the PDA Guide.

During the COVID-19 response, we were unable to have the public comment period we had originally planned. For this reason, we will accept any and all feedback from external partners via [FEMA-RecoveryPolicy-Inbox@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-RecoveryPolicy-Inbox@fema.dhs.gov) for a full year, until June 8, 2021, and I encourage you to solicit feedback from your states, territories, tribes, and local governments.

Finally, the COVID-19 public health emergency may require an increased emphasis on desktop (or virtual) assessments; while the Guide does have information on PA desktop assessments, I recommend reaching out to Sara Whitehead ([sara.whitehead@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:sara.whitehead@fema.dhs.gov)), the Recovery Operations Officer, for any specific questions or guidance.

For any questions about the PDA Guide itself, please contact Jacob Rodriguez-Noble ([jacob.rodrigueznoble@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:jacob.rodrigueznoble@fema.dhs.gov)) in the Recovery Front Office.

cc: David Bibo, Acting Associate Administrator, Office of Response and Recovery  
Melissa Forbes, Assistant Administrator, Recovery Directorate  
Christopher B. Smith, Director, Individual Assistance Division  
Tom Breslin, Deputy Director, Individual Assistance Division  
Traci Brasher, Acting Director, Public Assistance Division  
Tod Wells, Deputy Director, Public Assistance Division

Attachments:

1. PDA Guide
2. PDA Pocket Guide
3. PDA Guide Summary of Changes Fact Sheet