



PDA Pocket Guide

August 2021



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Overview

The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) Pocket Guide serves as a quick reference tool for FEMA, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) government partners conducting PDAs to determine the magnitude of damage and impact of disasters. For more detailed information on PDAs, refer to the *FEMA Preliminary Damage Assessment Guide*.

What are Preliminary Damage Assessments?

The PDA process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and the resulting unmet needs of individuals, businesses, the public sector, and the community. Information collected is used by the state as a basis for the governor's request and by FEMA to document the recommendation made to the President in response to the governor's request.

With the support of the state, tribe, or territory, local governments first conduct initial damage assessments (IDA) to determine if they require federal support. Once SLTT governments determine their capability to respond to or recover from the event is exceeded, the state, tribe, or territory requests a joint PDA with FEMA.



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The PDA Process

Conduct Initial Damage Assessment

Local or tribal government collects data to estimate extent of damage



Send IDA Data

Local and tribal governments send data to state/territory – or, the tribe chooses not to participate in the state declaration and sends IDA data directly to FEMA



IDA Verification

State, territory, or tribe verifies IDA data



Request Joint PDA

State, territory, or tribe requests joint PDA with FEMA



Conduct Joint PDA

FEMA and SLTT Partner(s) conduct joint PDA to assess and validate damage



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Reminders

Key Information SLTT Can Provide FEMA

To expedite and streamline the joint PDA process, SLTT governments should collect and document damage information, including the following:

- Locations of damages (including projected damages) using Global Positioning System (GPS) or annotated maps;
- Damage dimensions, materials, and the size or capacity of damaged facility elements;
- Representative sample of photographs of damage;
- Known access and functional needs (AFN) populations;
- Location of displaced families;
- How the state/tribe/locals are assisting (state disaster programs, food stamps, etc.);
- Lack of temporary housing; and
- Primary languages spoken.



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Tribal Considerations

- Federally-recognized tribes may conduct damage assessments by working directly with FEMA in support of a direct major disaster declaration request, or with the state(s).
- Tribes should determine who is legally responsible for each damaged facility and dwelling. By determining legal responsibility, the tribe can determine if damage is eligible for the Individual Assistance or Public Assistance programs, or if the damage is the responsibility of another federal agency.
- Tribes should consult closely with their FEMA regional office, and as needed, with the state(s) for any PDA related technical assistance.

The list of federally recognized tribes can be found [here](#) for reference.



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Do's and Don'ts of the PDA Process

Do:

- Verify damages with visual inspection
- Determine insurance coverage
- Capture points of contact
- Be sensitive discussing damages with property owners
- Consider impacts to businesses
- Ensure current assessments are accurate
- Balance your time, as efficiency is key
- Check with Coordinator on whether to wear government gear
- Know casualties in advance
- Use provided cost codes to validate claimed costs
- Stay in your lane when approached by media
- Confirm damage occurred within the applicable incident period

Do not:

- Collect any Personally Identifiable Information
- Drive through flood waters
- Wear open toe shoes
- Visit any sites that would put you in an unsafe situation
- Make eligibility determinations in the field without proper leadership reviews
- Conduct assessments on tribal property or culturally significant sites or items without permission
- Talk to anyone about something you are unsure about
- Wear government gear if it is unsafe to do so
- Smoke on site inspections
- Wear excessive perfume when sharing cars



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Individual Assistance

FEMA individual assistance (IA) programs deliver supplemental assistance to disaster survivors for unmet needs caused by a disaster. Support may include assistance for temporary housing and housing repairs, critical disaster-related expenses, the replacement of essential personal property, and funding to the SLTT government for IA program services. For more information, refer to the [Individual Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#) (IAPPG).

Degrees of Damage Definitions

For the purposes of efficiency, FEMA has established four categories of damage that an impacted home may fall within: destroyed, major, minor, or affected. In many cases, the size and needs of the unfolding disaster will not allow PDA teams to conduct a detailed review of each home. Joint PDA teams should use the following standards for categorizing degrees of damage:

- **Affected:** a home is considered affected if the damage to the home is mostly cosmetic.
- **Minor:** a home with repairable non-structural damage.
- **Major:** a home with structural damage or other significant damage that requires extensive repairs.
- **Destroyed:** the home is a total loss.

For more detailed information on the four degrees of damage, reference the degree of damage tables presented later in this pocket guide.



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Essential Living Spaces

During the PDA process, it is important to consider what is considered an essential living space. An essential living space is a room within a home that serves the function of a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and/or living room that is regularly occupied or used by one or more members of the household and requires repair to bring its functionality back to the home (e.g., kitchens are considered essential as long as there is not another undamaged kitchen in the home).

Inaccessible Residences

For both manufactured and conventionally built homes, inaccessible residences are those in which damage to the home cannot be visually verified because of disaster-related loss of access.

- In the case of flooding incidents, flood waters are blocking access to residences by covering, washing out, or destroying roads, bridges, or access routes so that the degree of damage cannot be visually verified.
- In the case of non-flood incidents, debris from landslides, mudslides, severe soil erosion, or blowdown is blocking access to residences by disrupting or destroying roads, bridges, or access routes so that the degree of damage cannot be visually verified.



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Individual Assistance Information

To evaluate damage to homes, FEMA has identified several elements of information that should be collected during damage assessments:

- Cause of disaster related damage
- Jurisdictions impacted and concentration of damage
- Number of homes impacted and degree of damage
- Homeownership rate of impacted homes
- Primary or secondary residences identification
- Percentage of affected households with insurance coverage appropriate to the peril
- Special Flood Hazard Areas, sanctioned communities, Coastal Barrier Resource System zones, and other protected areas
- Inaccessible communities
- Tribal declaration-specific data and eligibility information (see *Tribal Declarations Pilot Guidance* for more information)
- Other relevant data, such as demographic profiles (e.g., poverty and disability levels), trauma, and impacts to the community.

It is also important to consider the following two factors:

- Percentage of damage homes owned by survivors vs. rented by survivors
- How many homes are primary vs. secondary residences



Conventionally Built Homes: Assessing Damage

Flood Damage	
Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any waterline in the crawl space or an unfinished basement when essential living space or mechanical components are not damaged or submerged.• Damage to a porch, carport, garage, and/or an outbuilding, etc.
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterline at 1 to 3 inches in an essential living space.• When waterline exceeds 3 inches but is below 18 inches, damage may be major or minor depending on the following factors: duration of the flood; contaminants in the water; if waterline reached outlets; and number of essential living spaces flooded.• Any waterline in a finished basement.
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterline above 18 inches or the electrical outlets in an essential living space.• Waterline on the first floor (regardless of depth) of a residence when basement is completely full.• When waterline exceeds 3 inches but is below 18 inches, damage may be major or minor depending on the following factors: Duration of the flood; contaminants in the water; if waterline reached outlets; and number of essential living spaces flooded.
Destroyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterline at the roofline or higher, or complete failure of two or more major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls, foundation, walls, or roof).



Non-Flood Damage

Non-Flood Damage	
Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cosmetic damage such as paint discoloration or loose siding.• Minimal missing shingles or siding.• Damage to an attached structure (e.g., porch, carport, garage, or outbuilding); gutters; screens; landscaping; retaining walls; or downed trees that do not affect access to the residence.
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonstructural damage to roof components over essential living spaces (e.g., shingles, roof covering, fascia board, soffit, flashing, and skylight).• Nonstructural damage to the interior wall components to include drywall and insulation.• Nonstructural damage to exterior components• Multiple small vertical cracks in the foundation.• Damage to chimney (i.e., tilting, falling, cracking, or separating from the residence).• Damage to mechanical components (e.g., furnace, boiler, water heater, HVAC, etc.).• Damage or disaster related contamination to a private well or septic system.
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure or partial failure of structural elements of the roof over essential living spaces, to include rafters, ceiling joists, ridge boards, etc.• Failure or partial failure of structural elements of the walls, to include framing, etc.• Failure or partial failure of foundation to include crumbling, bulging, collapsing, horizontal cracks of more than two inches, and shifting of the residence on the foundation of more than six inches.
Destroyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only foundation remains.• Complete failure of two or more major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls, foundation, walls, or roof).• The residence has a confirmed imminent danger (e.g., impending landslides, mudslides, or sinkholes).



Manufactured Homes: Assessing Damage

Flood Damage

Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residences with damage to a porch, carport, garage, and/or an outbuilding, etc.• No damage affecting habitability; cosmetic damage only (e.g., skirting is impacted).
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When the waterline has reached the floor system but has not entered the living space of the unit. Examples of damage include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bottom board, insulation, or ductwork in the floor system• HVAC is impacted• There is no structural damage to the residence, and it has not been displaced from the foundation.
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water has covered the floor system and entered the living space of the unit, but is still below the roofline.• The residence has been displaced from the foundation, block, or piers, and other structural components have been damaged.
Destroyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The residence is a total loss, for example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterline is at the roofline or higher• Residence's frame is bent, twisted, or otherwise compromised



Non-Flood Damage

Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No damage affecting habitability; cosmetic damage only (e.g., skirting is impacted).• Residences with damage to a porch, carport, garage, and/or an outbuilding, etc.
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no structural damage to the residence, and it has not been displaced from the foundation.• Some of the nonstructural components have sustained damage (e.g., windows, doors, wall coverings, roof, bottom board insulation, ductwork, and/or utility hook ups).• HVAC is impacted.
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The residence has been displaced from the foundation, block, or piers, and other structural components have been damaged.• 50% or more of nonstructural components have sustained significant damage (e.g., roof, walls, utilities).
Destroyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The residence's frame is bent, twisted, or otherwise compromised.• The majority of the structural framing of the roof or walls has been compromised, exposing the interior.



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Public Assistance

The FEMA public assistance (PA) program provides supplemental federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and specific facilities of certain private nonprofit organizations. The PA program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future incidents by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures. For more information, refer to the [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#) (PAPPG).



Public Assistance Information

The six primary factors considered when evaluating a request for the FEMA PA program are:

- Estimated cost of assistance
- Insurance coverage in force
- Other Federal assistance programs
- Localized impacts
- Hazard mitigation
- Recent multiple disasters

Including the six factors above, tribes have additional considerations when evaluating requests for PA. Refer to the *Tribal Declarations Pilot Guidance* for more information.

To be considered eligible for FEMA PA, work must:

- Be required as a result of the disaster
- Be within a jurisdiction being assessed
- Be the legal responsibility of a potential SLTT government or eligible private nonprofit organization



PA Work Categories

PA Work Categories	
Category A Debris	Emergency Work <i>This work must be done immediately to save lives; protect public health and safety; protect improved property; or eliminate or lessen the threat of additional damage.</i>
Category B Emergency Protective Measures (EPM)	
Category C Roads and Bridges	
Category D Water Control Facilities	Permanent Work <i>Work that is required to restore a facility damaged by the event to its pre-disaster size, capacity, and function in accordance with applicable codes and standards.</i>
Category E Buildings and Equipment	
Category F Utilities	
Category G Parks, Recreational, and Other Facilities	



Supporting Documentation

The following information should be collected for each PA work category while conducting a PDA. However, this table is not all-encompassing and other documentation may be requested during the PDA process.

Supporting Documentation	PA Work Category						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Photographs (sample if multiple similar damage has occurred)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Force account (work completed)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Basis for estimations (work to be completed)			X	X	X	X	X
Historic costs for similar work (provide example for large projects)			X	X	X	X	X
Notated maps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Contracts, bids, or invoices	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commercial estimating source report (RS Means, Cost Works, etc.)			X	X	X	X	X
Codes and standards to be considered (provide when the code or standard will dramatically increase the cost of restoration)			X	X	X	X	X
Estimate by professional familiar with the facility (provide breakdown - especially when replacement is requested)			X	X	X	X	X
Recent safety inspection reports or maintenance records that show pre-disaster condition (provide for large projects)			X	X			
Information used to evaluate the need for reconditioning (provide if reconditioning is requested)						X	
Debris quantity calculation sheet	X						
Mutual aid agreements used (provide for large projects)		X					
Specifications or as-built drawings of the damaged facility (provide when helpful, only for large projects)				X			
Recent inspection reports or maintenance records that show pre-disaster condition (provide when pre-disaster condition may impact estimate of large project)				X			
Insurance documentation needed to establish deductible and limits (provide for large projects)					X		



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