



# GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO MASS EVACUATION

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## GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO MASS EVACUATION

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governors should be prepared from Day One of their administration to manage a major disaster. That could include managing a corresponding evacuation. When implemented effectively, evacuations are a primary mechanism to protect lives. Each evacuation, like each disaster, is unique and presents a governor with challenges that require him or her to take actions that the state's emergency plans might not address. Conducting a safe evacuation that protects citizens, businesses, and properties requires effective coordination and communication as well as decisive action. Poor handling of a large evacuation has the potential to be a disaster unto itself and risks becoming the unwanted legacy of a governor's administration.

Unfortunately, because of changing demographics, increases in extreme weather events, aging infrastructure, and more individuals living in risky geographic areas, governors are increasingly likely to order or oversee a large-scale evacuation.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is essential governors and other state leaders understand not only the state's written evacuation plans but also the underlying concepts and dynamics of evacuations.

Evacuations involving multiple communities or states are by their nature disruptive and require the flexibility of decision makers, trust in past planning and training efforts, and leadership for successful implementation. Evacuations involve more than just the transportation of a population out of a vulnerable area. Proper evacuations also must incorporate proven methods for multijurisdictional and agency coordination; public communications; traffic control; sheltering and mass care; shelter-in-place strategies; and repopulation. In addition, how an evacuation occurs—whether planned in advance, recommended, mandatory, or spontaneous (for example, as the result of an act of terror)—affects how state and local emergency management manage the evacuation.

Evacuations involve more than just governmental agencies and officials. Successful evacuation planning and execution include strong coordination with key nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the American Red Cross and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. Those organizations are essential sources of support and resources during times of disaster including providing things like food, shelter, and communications. Similarly, the private sector in the form of both large retail businesses and smaller "Main Street" businesses plays a critical role in creating resilient communities during disasters and during repopulation after an evacuation.

An evacuation only ends, however, when an affected population returns home or is permanently relocated. As such, governors should ensure that their state has adequate plans and processes in place to support the return of evacuated populations to any given geographic areas. Similarly to an evacuation, temporary reentry and permanent repopulation planning and execution should be done in coordination with local and tribal governments. That includes supporting reopening schools and local businesses as soon as possible to help a community return to normal.

Governors can take eight key actions to prepare themselves and their states for a large evacuation. Those actions include the following:

- ♦ **KNOW YOUR AUTHORITY.** Governors should know the full extent of their emergency powers before any disaster strikes. Maintaining a governor's "playbook" building on those powers can be a useful tool;

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Finneran, "More Extreme Weather Events Forecast," NASA Langley Research Center (January 16, 2013), [http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/science/climate\\_assessment\\_2012.html](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/science/climate_assessment_2012.html) (accessed October 7, 2014).

- ◆ **ORGANIZE YOUR STAFF.** Governors need a well-organized team to help manage a major evacuation. Identifying that team and ensuring they know their roles in advance are essential;
- ◆ **COORDINATE WITH FEDERAL, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS.** Evacuations by their very nature involve a range of governmental organizations. Governors should take steps to ensure that they coordinate their actions with those of local and federal government, especially as evacuations cross jurisdictional boundaries;
- ◆ **COORDINATE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND NGOS.** Governors should ensure coordination with the private sector and NGOs, since they provide many critical services;
- ◆ **PREPARE YOUR CITIZENS.** Governors can help promote a resilient citizenry by ensuring they are as prepared as possible for an evacuation or shelter-in-place order. This includes providing information in advance of or during a disaster about the types of supplies they will need, the length of time they will need to be self-sufficient (typically 72 hours), and where they can access emergency information and services;
- ◆ **TRAIN TO THE PLAN.** Emergency operations and evacuation plans are only as good as the training that undergirds them. Governors should ensure that their state conducts regular training to test and improve their state’s emergency plans;
- ◆ **ESTABLISH SHELTERS PLANS AND PRACTICES.** Establish clear policies and orders for shelters, including for determining activation; assigning management responsibilities; defining reimbursement procedures; and assessing statewide capabilities. Those plans also should include providing for special-needs and vulnerable populations;
- ◆ **PLAN FOR RE-ENTRY AND REPOPULATION.** Governors should have a decision-making process in place to decide how, when, and if an evacuated population can return to a geographic area following a disaster.

## I. EVACUATION BASICS

### GOVERNORS SHOULD:

- Familiarize themselves with state emergency operations plans to provide a baseline of understanding;
- Ensure that evacuation plans are fully operable and that they describe the conditions necessary to initiate, execute, and cease an evacuation or a shelter-in-place strategy;
- Establish clear, unified command and control authority; operational strategies; and sound communication procedures;
- Establish evacuation roles and responsibilities across state agencies, federal government, and NGOs; and
- Understand the terminology used to implement evacuations, their potential effect on participation rates, and the legal implications of different types of warning orders.

### OVERVIEW

Some disasters give no warning; others can be forecast. Either way, a governor should be prepared at any time to respond and, if needed, order an evacuation. Primary causes of evacuations in the United States include wildfires, flooding, and hazardous materials incidents.<sup>2</sup> Other more high-profile but less likely causes include hurricanes, terrorism, and seismic events. Despite what has been learned from large-scale evacuations, states still face numerous challenges to move people away from disasters, shelter them until it is safe to return, and repopulate the affected area.

According to a 2005 report by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, evacuations in which 1,000 or more Americans are displaced from their homes or offices occur approximately every three weeks.<sup>3</sup> Even the smallest evacuation can have ripple effects for the affected community and require state support.

Localized evacuations, such as those occurring as a consequence of a small hazardous materials event, are largely handled by local police and fire departments. As they grow in scope, however, the governor is placed in a position to exercise his or her authority. Although some states have developed detailed hazard-specific plans for evacuation—such as in hurricane zones, wildfire areas, and Emergency Protections Zones (EPZs) surrounding nuclear power plants—a number of communities do not have plans that are well-coordinated with neighboring towns and states or that use common evacuation terminology or procedures.

Recent evacuations—such as the mandatory East Coast evacuations from Hurricane Irene in 2011 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012—show that communities still face basic preparedness challenges. The unexpected East Coast earthquake in August 2011 caused mass evacuations of cities such as Washington, D.C., where public transit, highways, and bridges were overwhelmed with the workforce attempting to leave en masse.

The responsibility for responding to disasters is built on layers of mutual support. Initial response almost always begins at the local level. When local capabilities and resources are overwhelmed, the state responds.

2 U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration. *Highway Evacuations in Selected Metropolitan Areas: Assessment of Impediments* (FHWA-HOP-10-059) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration, 2010).

3 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, *Identification and Analysis of Factors Affecting Emergency Evacuations* (NUREG/CR-6864, Vol. 1) (Washington, DC: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 2005).

When a state’s capabilities and resources are overwhelmed, it turns to other states for assistance through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and federally through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). All federal resources are in support of FEMA.

## STATE AND LOCAL PLANS

Governors should be aware of their state emergency operation and evacuation plans. The plans serve different purposes but are mutually dependent. Both types of plans help define the roles and actions of state and local units of government. Governors should be familiar with those plans and their interplay.

**State Emergency Operations Plans.** State emergency operations plans articulate who will do what, as well as when, with which resources and by what authority before, during, and immediately after an emergency. Those plans are intended to include general considerations to guide planning and preparedness for all hazards that threaten the state. Further, the state emergency operations plan provides a framework that ensures all levels of government (state, local, and federal) are able to respond in a coordinated fashion during an emergency. Governors should familiarize themselves with those plans to provide a baseline of understanding of the state’s roles and responsibilities during an emergency.

**Evacuation Plans.** Evacuation plans describe the conditions necessary to initiate, execute, and cease an evacuation or shelter-in-place strategy. Although each state is unique, those plans typically exist in support of, or are contained within, state emergency operations plans. Ideally, the state’s evacuation plan should build on local governments’ plans, but often they do not.

The most effective evacuation plans are based on the range of likely risks to infrastructure, communities, and businesses. In addition, they are designed to implement time-phased evacuations with the goal of moving the most vulnerable populations (for example, residents in the path of a hazmat plume) out of harm’s way first. Among the basic elements evacuation plans include are the following:

- ◆ Hazards and vulnerabilities that can cause evacuations;
- ◆ Decision-making authority;
- ◆ Types of evacuations (mandatory or voluntary);
- ◆ Clear evacuation terminology coupled with legal implications;
- ◆ Interagency and multijurisdictional coordination and communication;
- ◆ Specific state agency roles and responsibilities;
- ◆ Concepts of operations, including timing of triggers for evacuation;
- ◆ Mass care and sheltering capability and implementation;
- ◆ Reverse-lane procedures (if necessary);
- ◆ Logistical contract support needs (public transit, buses, ambulances); and
- ◆ Beneficial mutual aid support agreements with counties, neighboring states, and NGOs.

Additionally, evacuation plans provide guidance on the timing of an evacuation; evacuation routes capable of supporting large numbers of evacuees; roles and responsibilities across agencies and levels of government, including identifying the lead agency in coordinating communication; and logistical support needed for an evacuation.

Although evacuation authority is clearly defined in state and local statutes, no federal or national certifying body approves evacuation plans, nor is there a national planning standard for evacuations. The federal government defers to states to develop state and local evacuation plans based on recommendations from core documents such as the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) and FEMA Comprehensive Planning Guide 101.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, evacuation plans vary widely by and within states.

## KEY EVACUATION CONCEPTS

As governors consider evacuation plans, they should be aware of several important concepts. Those include phasing, contra flows, and sheltering in place. Understanding those elements will help governors better determine the timing of the evacuation, traffic flow to evacuate citizens, and when to tell citizens to hunker down and shelter in place.

**Phasing Evacuations.** Phasing is essential to a successful evacuation since it will help a governor determine the priorities and timing of an evacuation--that is, who should evacuate first and when. Initiating a large evacuation without phasing risks not moving the most vulnerable populations out of harm's way and creating large traffic jams.

Phasing will also help governors consider evacuation options and better understand the timing of when to order an evacuation. That is especially important when the specific effect or location of a forecasted event is unclear. For example, a hurricane evacuation can take 72 hours or longer, yet hurricane forecasting is not accurate enough to determine exactly when or where a storm will make landfall three days out.<sup>5</sup> Because of that, a governor could need to make a decision to evacuate based on limited information about who to evacuate and when. Phasing can help to improve that decision-making process.

One way to successfully implement phasing is to predetermine evacuation zones for specific geographic areas and establish baseline clearance times for those areas. Clearance time is the time it takes to safely evacuate an area or zone. Governors should work with local jurisdictions to establish those zones and educate citizens on which zone they reside in. Once a threat is imminent or occurring, evacuation orders should be issued for zones that are vulnerable based on the type and timing of the threat.

4 FEMA, "Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act," (as amended 2013): [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1383153669955-21f970b19e8eaa67087b7da9f4af706e/stafford\\_act\\_booklet\\_042213\\_508e.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1383153669955-21f970b19e8eaa67087b7da9f4af706e/stafford_act_booklet_042213_508e.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2014); and FEMA, "Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans," Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101, Version 2.0 (2010): [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1828-25045-0014/cpg\\_101\\_comprehensive\\_preparedness\\_guide\\_developing\\_and\\_maintaining\\_emergency\\_operations\\_plans\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1828-25045-0014/cpg_101_comprehensive_preparedness_guide_developing_and_maintaining_emergency_operations_plans_2010.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2014).

5 Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Response Framework/Mass Evacuation Incident Annex (EVAC-1) (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2008).



Finally, states should be prepared to respond to several different events happening at once; phasing can assist in that as well. For example, evacuations can be impaired by roadway construction along evacuation routes or traffic accidents, such as in 1995 during Hurricane Michelle, when a tanker truck overturned in the Florida Keys and blocked a highway. Using the information gleaned from phasing will help a governor mitigate these types of unforeseen circumstances.

**Contra-Flow Plans.** Governors could need to issue emergency orders to reverse the flow of traffic on an interstate in order to assist outbound traffic and decrease evacuation clearance times. Many coastal states have established contra-flow plans to turn major evacuation routes into one-way traffic. In some cases, reversing lanes does not reduce evacuation clearance times enough to justify the use of emergency resources and funding necessary to implement those intricate plans.

Contra-flow plans are not typically used for no-notice events for a variety of reasons, including the time required to implement them and the need for emergency crews to get to the affected areas, which can be complicated when inbound lanes are no longer available. However, in areas where threats typically allow for advance notification such as a hurricane, governors should consider contra-flow plans. Although contra flow can be expensive, under certain conditions, it can help to reduce evacuation clearance times if activated at the proper time.

**Shelter-In-Place.** In some disasters residents are safer in their homes or workplace rather than on the roads. Determining whether to issue a shelter-in-place order is based on the type and timing of a threat. Developing a pre-established process or set of criteria that weighs the potential risks and benefits under various situations and for different populations can be helpful to governors in making that determination.

Sheltering in place could be short-term or long-term, depending on the emergency. Governors should help the public understand the importance of identifying a place before a disaster or emergency that will protect them from the hazard as well as ensuring they have enough supplies for the duration of the shelter-in-place order.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND WARNING ESSENTIALS

Governors should plan to use the widest array of communication methods possible to ensure that the public receives vital information during disasters. Those include television, radio, road signs, texts, and social media. Governors can also use systems like the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System to push information out to the public by using them to issue emergency alerts, including wireless emergency alerts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems.<sup>6</sup> States have also developed disaster applications for mobile phones that allow users to receive up-to-date information and warnings.

Governors also should understand the terminology used to implement evacuations, their potential effect on participation rates, and the legal implications of different types of warning orders. Clear, timely, and phased warning orders must be communicated to the public in a manner designed to elicit high participation rates. Different types of warnings are appropriate in different situations, so it is imperative for governors to clearly communicate evacuation orders to those in danger.

<sup>6</sup> Fema.gov, "Integrated Public Alert Warning System" Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency <http://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system> (August 2014).

Terms such as “mandatory,” “voluntary,” “partial,” and “recommended” have specific legal implications, and the precise meaning of those terms varies from state to state. For example, some states have arrest authority for citizens who refuse to heed a mandatory evacuation. In some states, public safety officials have a reduced liability to respond to 911 calls during mandatory evacuations. Governors are encouraged to review terminology and work with FEMA and state, local, and tribal emergency management agencies to create effective and clear terminology consistent with the National Incident Management System. The terminology should be phrased in a manner that causes citizens in imminent danger to react quickly.

As defined in the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 (CPG 101):<sup>7</sup>

- ◆ A *voluntary evacuation* is a warning to persons within a designated area that a threat to life and property exists or is likely to exist in the immediate future. Individuals issued this type of warning or order are not required to evacuate; however, it would be to their advantage to do so.
- ◆ A *mandatory or directed evacuation* is a warning to persons within the designated area that an imminent threat to life and property exists, and individuals must evacuate in accordance with the instructions of local officials.

Unfortunately, terminology is often used inconsistently and inappropriately and can be confusing to the public, which can affect evacuation participation rates. Many times, citizens wait for “mandatory” evacuations to be issued before leaving. FEMA National Hurricane Program post-storm studies regularly indicate that, as one might expect, the public is most likely to heed the term “mandatory evacuation” rather than “voluntary, partial, or recommended evacuation.” That is significant since residents who wait to heed warnings often experience heavy traffic and longer commute times to their evacuation destinations, potentially placing them in danger.

Timing of the evacuation warning order also is critical. For example, issuing hurricane evacuation warnings late in the afternoon typically causes people to wait until the following morning, which can increase traffic congestion as large numbers of citizens evacuate at the same time.

Finally, governors should develop strategies in advance for communicating with citizens with special needs, those with limited access to mass media, and evacuated or evacuating populations. That is important since those with special needs can require several days of medicines or extra support in evacuating. Those with limited access to mass or social media might be unaware that they are in harm’s way. And those who have evacuated an area need shelter information and need to be aware of when it is safe to return home.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans/Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101/Version 2.0* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2010).

## II. ESSENTIAL PREPARATORY ACTIONS FOR GOVERNORS

### GOVERNORS SHOULD:

- Understand their statutory and executive authority, including emergency powers, as well as their limitations;
- Organize their staff to ensure that a multidisciplinary core group of senior officials is available to provide advice and assistance;
- Coordinate and collaborate with federal, local, and tribal government and the private sector during and while planning for a disaster;
- Consider a regular and systematic approach for educating the public about disaster and evacuation preparedness; and
- Conduct an annual cabinet-level exercise to review and evaluate the state's evacuation plan against different scenarios.

A disaster can take many forms; so too can an evacuation. For example, a planned evacuation for a hurricane is very different than one for a low- to no-notice evacuation for an EPZ surrounding a nuclear power plant, a hazardous materials leak, or an act of terrorism. Governors, therefore, must prepare for a range of evacuations. Sometimes pre-evacuation staging of resources is possible, but at other times it is not.

There are six key actions governors can take to ensure that their state is as prepared as possible for an evacuation.

### KNOW YOUR AUTHORITY

Governors should be aware of their authority in two essential areas, emergency powers and budget and procurement authority.

**Emergency Powers.** One of the first steps for governors to ensure a well-executed evacuation is to know the extent of their emergency powers. Governors serve as commanders-in-chief of their state militias and assume special powers upon the declaration of a disaster or other emergency. Although a governor's powers vary from state to state, generally they include the authority to suspend statutory and regulatory provisions that might hinder disaster response; require hospitalization for those injured during a disaster; control entry and exit into the emergency area; direct the evacuation of residents and prescribe transportation routes; provide temporary shelter; commandeer property (with compensation); control or suspend utility services; and limit or suspend the sale and possession of alcohol, firearms, and explosives following a disaster or emergency.<sup>8</sup> A state disaster declaration activates state and local emergency response plans and allows the governor and his or her staff to deploy forces, supplies, and equipment.

Depending on the disaster or emergency, the governor could need to call on his or her evacuation authority to safeguard the well-being of the state's citizens. Evacuation authority differs from state to state. Most day-to-day, small-scale evacuations are initiated by local public safety officials and do not require state support or decision-making authority. For large-scale events affecting multiple jurisdictions, nearly all governors have the authority to issue orders to evacuate.

<sup>8</sup> Emergency Management and Homeland Security Statutory Authorities in the States, District of Columbia and Insular Areas: A Summary, CRS RL32287 (2004).

As defined by state law, governors can declare a state of emergency to help support evacuations and invoke exceptional authority. For example, a state of emergency can grant the authority to limit the rise of fuel prices at gas stations during an evacuation. Governors can also request a pre-disaster declaration from FEMA to help recover evacuation costs as stated in FEMA Policy FP 010-4, Pre-Disaster Emergency Declaration Requests.<sup>9</sup> However, that assistance is capped, and states may assume a large portion of the costs. Regardless of evacuation authority, governors must always communicate their evacuation intentions for any event to local governments and the affected citizens. Declaring a state of emergency can be an essential first step in this process.

How governors execute their emergency authority differs from state to state, sometimes because of legal differences and in other cases because of precedent or cultural reasons. For example, in **Georgia**, the governor has the authority to issue mandatory evacuation orders, but historically county jurisdictions have issued evacuation orders for their citizens for hurricane-based events. In **Alabama**, by contrast, the governor is the only official with the power to issue a mandatory evacuation order when several county jurisdictions are threatened; local officials can issue only voluntary orders.

**Emergency budget and procurement authorities.** Evacuations are costly and, despite possible federal assistance, states and localities typically bear the majority of the costs. As such, governors should be familiar with their budget authority during emergencies. They should also be familiar with the mechanics of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and the Stafford Act, since each has implications for costs and cost recovery.<sup>10</sup> Finally, governors should be aware of the different processes to provide funds to pay for the mobilization of the National Guard.

In some states, governors have exceptional budgeting and purchasing authority during declared disasters that allow for the prompt purchase of necessary resources or services. That authority is detailed in state statute and varies considerably by state. Governors' budget officers should maintain a list of those emergency authorities and understand the conditions that will allow them to be exercised. Additionally, because many states' procurement laws limit sole-source contracts and often require lengthy periods before the ratification of a contract, governors could establish prepositioned contracts for essential services, such as debris removal and food services, during disasters.

Governors should also be aware of the procedures for accessing resources through EMAC and the Stafford Act. EMAC allows a state in need to call for assistance from other states, but those services are not free. Under EMAC, the requesting state and assisting state negotiate reimbursement of costs, which can be substantial, depending on the disaster. Following demobilization of the services, the assisting state will send the requesting state a reimbursement request.

Likewise, the Stafford Act provides states access to federal physical and financial resources. Those resources, including in some instances from the Department of Defense, are coordinated through FEMA. FEMA's role is to lead the federal effort whereby other federal agencies support FEMA but not the state directly. In other words, a governor makes a request to FEMA for a particular type of assistance, often referred to as a "requirement," and it is FEMA's responsibility to identify the appropriate federal asset. Governors should note that Stafford Act disaster assistance does guarantee that a state will receive federal financial assistance to offset or mitigate the costs of a disaster.

9 FEMA.gov, "Pre-Disaster Emergency Declaration Requests," FEMA Policy FP 010-4 (2012): [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1834-25045-8009/pre\\_disaster\\_emergency\\_declaration\\_requests\\_policy\\_fp010\\_4.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1834-25045-8009/pre_disaster_emergency_declaration_requests_policy_fp010_4.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2014).

10 "Emergency Management Assistance Compact," <http://www.emacweb.org/> (accessed October 7, 2014).

## ORGANIZE YOUR STAFF

When a disaster strikes, governors will seek advice from a multidisciplinary core group of senior officials. Each official plays an essential role. At a minimum, those individuals should include:

- ◆ **CHIEF OF STAFF.** The governor’s chief of staff represents the governor and presents his or her expectations. In times of disasters or emergencies, the chief of staff is responsible for developing standard processes for handling disaster response; managing cabinet members as they execute their roles and responsibilities; and ensuring that a single message is communicated;
- ◆ **STATE ADJUTANT GENERAL.** The National Guard’s expertise and equipment can serve as a key resource for governors to use before, during, or after a disaster or emergency. As the head of the state’s National Guard, the adjutant general is critical in coordinating Guard resources to support the state response;
- ◆ **HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR.** The homeland security advisor acts on the governor’s behalf in the event of a disaster or an emergency and has the authority to make critical decisions regarding policies, procedures, and communications with responders;
- ◆ **EMERGENCY MANAGER.** The emergency manager, if different from the homeland security advisor, coordinates the state’s disaster mitigation, preparedness, protection, response, and recovery processes;
- ◆ **TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY.** The transportation secretary serves a key role in advising the governor on transportation routes, methods, and resources that support the disaster evacuation, response, and return of the public to their communities;
- ◆ **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SECRETARY(IES).** Disasters often have public health consequences. The health and human services secretary can keep the governor informed about potential public health issues to inform residents on as they return after they have evacuated;
- ◆ **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR OR PRESS SECRETARY.** The communications director or press secretary craft unified messages for the governor’s office and cabinet; compile and disseminate consistent, accurate information; and maintain critical lines of communication among state and local officials, the federal government, the press, and the public; and
- ◆ **STATE POLICE/HIGHWAY PATROL DIRECTOR.** The state police or highway patrol director is responsible for conducting statewide law enforcement activities. During an evacuation, those responsibilities may include managing traffic flow and providing support to first responders. Therefore, the director of the state police or highway patrol helps the governor identify what the capabilities of law enforcement are before, during, and after an evacuation.

Other important staff could include:

- ◆ **LEGAL COUNSEL.** The governor’s legal counsel identifies and articulates the legal requirements, responsibilities, and implications to the governor and his or staff before, during, and after an event. In addition, the legal counsel leads or assists in preparing declarations of emergencies, disaster relief agreements between the state and the FEMA, memorandums of understanding between the state and other states, and memorandums of understanding between the state and the federal government;

- ◆ **BUDGET DIRECTOR.** The budget director conducts program and management evaluations, economic and review analysis, and examination of caseload and demographic data to determine need. The budget director can help governors allocate funds for evacuations; and
- ◆ **AGRICULTURE SECRETARY.** The public will take into account how to care for pets and livestock in the event of an evacuation. The state agriculture secretary can provide the governor with advice on how to handle pets and livestock before, during, and after an evacuation.

Working with this team early is essential to ensuring that they know their roles well in advance of a disaster.

## COORDINATE WITH FEDERAL, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

All disasters and responses are local. Evacuations, however, by their very nature cross borders, require intra- and inter-state coordination, and are costly. They can also involve the federal government. Evacuation planning, therefore, should be a collaborative exercise that cuts across governments, disciplines, and jurisdictions to help inform the decision of whether to evacuate and to coordinate the evacuation. Governors, mayors, county executives, FEMA regional administrators, firefighters, law enforcement, transportation and highway administrators, emergency management, National Guard, and public health and emergency medical responders all have a role to play, as do NGOs such as the American Red Cross.

Coordination among state, local, tribal, and the federal governments is difficult for a number of reasons, including the fact that there is no national standard or certifying body for evacuation plans. Because of that, jurisdictions have differing definitions, trigger points, and procedures for evacuations. That is problematic since an uncoordinated evacuation of one town can bring gridlock to a region, thus putting individuals at risk of being trapped in a disaster zone or running out of gas, water, and food while stuck in traffic.

There are other challenges to consider as well when looking to improve coordination. Growing populations in vulnerable areas (for example, nuclear EPZ, flood zones, and storm surge zones) increase the number of potential evacuees and evacuation clearance times. Many local jurisdictions have developed evacuation plans without coordinating with their neighbors. In addition, a 2010 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) audit found that FEMA's ability to support a large-scale evacuation outside of the Gulf Coast remains a major concern.<sup>11</sup> For governors, that means individuals could be in harm's way, local plans might not ensure an orderly or safe evacuation, and the federal government has only limited ability to support state and local governments for much of the country during large evacuations.

Those and other challenges suggest the governors should improve coordination and collaboration with federal, local, and tribal governments by including them in planning and preparation activities and by ensuring communication during events (for example, through stakeholders' conference calls).

Because evacuation plans build on local information, governors should ensure that states work with local and tribal governments to conduct regular hazard, vulnerability, and transportation assessments to:

- ◆ Determine events that can create the need to evacuate;
- ◆ Identify and understand the risks in a geographic area;
- ◆ Determine which citizens and what critical infrastructure are vulnerable;

<sup>11</sup> Department of Homeland Security/Office of Inspector General, *FEMA's Preparedness for the Next Catastrophic Disaster - An Update* (OIG-10-123) (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security/Office of Inspector General, 2010).

- ◆ Understand the population demographics of vulnerable areas (such as the number of citizens dependent on public transportation or the number of citizens who will seek shelter);
- ◆ Establish evacuation zones with corresponding evacuation clearance times and educate the public about their zone;
- ◆ Define the timing and trigger points for declaring an evacuation;
- ◆ Review evacuation route strategies and establish evacuation routes that eventually lead to infrastructure where evacuees can be supported; and
- ◆ Understand potential roadway network bottlenecks and how capacity can be impaired by the type and location of evacuations issued by officials.

### THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS AND DUAL-STATUS COMMANDERS

In discussing state and federal coordination, it is important to note the role of the Council of Governors and the establishment of dual-status commanders. The Council of Governors (Council) was established in January 2010 to bring together governors and key federal officials to discuss matters pertaining to the National Guard, homeland defense, civil support, synchronization of state and federal military activities, and other matters of mutual interest. The Council consists of 10 governors who are appointed by the President, with two governors appointed as co-chairs. The federal members include the secretary of defense, secretary of homeland security, assistant to the President for homeland security and counterterrorism, chief of the National Guard bureau, and commander of U.S. Northern Command.

To improve coordination between state and federal military forces during disaster responses, the Council worked with the Department of Defense and Congress to permit the appointment of dual-status commanders during emergency response. Dual-status command allows a National Guard officer or a commissioned federal military officer to simultaneously direct both state (in State Active Duty and Title 32 status) and federal (Title 10 status) military forces during disaster response. This type of coordination is essential to ensure unity of effort between state and federal military forces during emergencies where a governor may require federal military support for preparation and response activities. The appointment of a dual-status commander is facilitated by a standing memorandum of agreement signed by the governor and the secretary of defense.

### COORDINATE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND NGOS

In all planning efforts, the state should consider the role the private sector will play in the course of an emergency. Coordination between the public and private sectors during an emergency remains a challenge. However, businesses can be reluctant to close for an evacuation, and they are often eager to re-open their facilities to serve a returning population. That in turn can affect workers' decisions on when to evacuate if their place of business remains open. Furthermore, business owners will want to ensure that their businesses are secure from damage, vandalism, and theft before they evacuate. Governors should work with the private sector to address their concerns as well as help them understand when to shutter their businesses and allow workers to leave.

The private sector also plays a crucial role in supply chains and energy assurance. In the event of any emergency or disaster, a governor's primary concern is ensuring that citizens are guaranteed access to essential services and "lifeline utilities" as soon as possible in the aftermath. It is therefore mandatory for public safety strategic planning to know the status of electric power, natural gas, potable water, wastewater, telecommunications, transportation, etc.

Vulnerabilities in the transmission, storage, and distribution supply chain create significant stresses on all subsectors of the energy system, including electricity, natural gas, and petroleum. As seen from recent hurricanes, the loss of power and resupply to gas stations can have a crippling effect on states' ability to recover. Gasoline and diesel are required for transportation and generators. Governors should consider in advance how they will ensure that gas stations are brought back online and have adequate supplies. A first step in that process is developing a comprehensive list of gas stations and a communications plan to determine their status during a disaster. Governors also should have contingency plans to resupply stations if the supply chain is disrupted. Finally, governors also should consider when and how they will implement a gas rationing plan. One common rationing option is an odd-even approach whereby individuals are only able to purchase gas based on the last digit on their license plate.

The private sector can also assist in a meaningful way when financial services are disrupted. After Hurricane Sandy, there was serious concern when people realized they were unable to access their financial accounts or ATMs to withdraw money to buy essential items. Citibank representatives took it upon themselves to lodge customer withdrawals in ledgers and handed out cash. That action helped to calm the public's fears and restore some order during the extended recovery process. Governors should work with the private sector to develop similar contingency plans.

Coordination of roles and resources between the public and private sectors is critical in disaster management. States' emergency operations centers (EOCs) can help. In the event of a disaster, the EOC coordinates the incident management response by providing information and resources during the response and short-term recovery.<sup>12</sup> An EOC can include representatives from the private sector to assist in the response.

In addition, some states have established business emergency operations centers (BEOCs) to focus on public-private collaboration in disaster management. While an EOC focuses on all aspects of the response and short-term recovery, the BEOC focuses solely on the private sector's role. The BEOC helps both sectors understand needs and capabilities; where to deploy resources; and economic effects. As an evacuation occurs, the private sector can provide support and situational awareness through the EOC or BEOC to state, local, tribal, territorial, or federal government.

In addition to working with the private sector, governors should coordinate with key NGOs in their state or region. Those organizations are essential sources of support and resources during times of disaster. Many states have preexisting contracts or agreements with NGOs to provide shelter, transportation, food, and other emergency services during disasters. NGOs can also be essential partners in assisting vulnerable populations, including children, seniors, and those with limited transportation options. To help coordinate response and support activities, NGOs should be provided with a point of contact within the state emergency operations center.

The National Voluntary Organization Active in Disasters, a coalition of many of the largest national NGOs, provides governors with information about the nonprofit groups that are active during disasters. In addition, governors should familiarize themselves with the smaller, more localized NGOs in their states or regions. In combination, those national and local NGOs are essential to the resilience of a community in terms of response and recovery.

The American Red Cross has a unique standing as an NGO in that it has been designated by Congress as an instrumentality of the federal government and is chartered to provide disaster relief during federally declared disasters. It also is included by name in the National Response Framework (NRF). The NRF was

<sup>12</sup> Fusion Centers and Emergency Operations Centers, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/fusion-centers-and-emergency-operations-centers> (accessed October 7, 2014).



developed by DHS to provide a way to organize the nation’s response to major disasters. The American Red Cross’ inclusion in the NRF means that it is included by design in all major disaster responses involving the federal government.<sup>13</sup>

The federal government designates specific interagency support roles whenever it provides resources to respond to a disaster. Those roles are identified through emergency support functions (ESFs). The American Red Cross is co-lead with FEMA for mass care under emergency support function six (ESF 6). Under ESF 6, the American Red Cross supports the provision of essential services, such as sheltering, feeding operations, emergency first aid, bulk distribution of emergency items, and family reunification. It also provides coordination among national NGOs.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, many states have their own formal relationships with American Red Cross chapters to provide services prior to or in the event of a disaster. Those services include communications, sheltering, facilities and equipment, procurement, and training. Before a disaster occurs, governors should ensure that the state emergency management agency works closely with the American Red Cross to coordinate expectations and to define roles, responsibilities, capabilities, and levels of services that the American Red Cross may be able to provide. For states that have preexisting contracts with the American Red Cross, this may also include defining how performance will be measured.

## PREPARE YOUR CITIZENS

Governors can also help improve their state’s readiness by improving the preparedness of their citizens. Major catastrophic events such as the 2005 hurricane season in the Gulf Coast show that no one sector—government, private, or public—can evacuate everyone, and that unfortunately not all citizens will heed evacuation orders, even if they are mandatory. A prepared public that is self-sufficient and evacuates on their own will help government focus on the more vulnerable populations and save more lives. Communicating those shared responsibilities in advance, educating the public on the importance of evacuation planning, and maintaining consistent messages are all essential steps to public preparedness.

Governors should have a regular and systematic approach to educating the public about evacuation preparedness: where to go for information, how to prepare “go-kits” or other personal emergency supplies in advance, and the meaning of evacuation warning order terminology.

Public education and citizen preparedness are arguably the most significant challenges for governors. Often, citizens do not understand why they are being asked to evacuate. For example, the storm surge that is driven by a hurricane is the primary reason evacuation orders are issued for coastal jurisdictions; however, most people believe they are only vulnerable to high winds in powerful storms. Confusion about basic evacuation preparedness is common. The challenge is compounded when citizens move to areas prone to events such as hurricanes, flooding, and wildfire and have not dealt with those types of disaster.

In other areas, the increasing severity of floods, wildfires, and hurricanes can lead to new benchmarks and recurring events that create citizen evacuation fatigue. Adding to that, many citizens cannot pay for multiple nights at a hotel during an evacuation, placing more demand upon public shelter capacity.

13 Redcross.org, “Our Federal Charter,” American Red Cross, <http://www.redcross.org/about-us/history/federal-charter> (accessed September 22, 2014).

14 FEMA.gov, “Emergency Support Function #6- Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services Annex,” May 2013, <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-esf-06.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2014).

## TRAIN TO THE PLAN

It is not enough to simply have an evacuation plan. States must train to the plan to ensure that it is workable and realistic. In addition to seeing that there are localized training exercises, governors should consider conducting an annual cabinet-level, table-top exercise to review and evaluate the state's evacuation plan against different potential scenarios. States that have established contra-flow plans should hold a full-scale exercise that requires the mobilization of teams and equipment in the field to simulate activation of the plan. Exercises should be designed to validate plans, expose shortfalls and planning gaps, and help educate personnel about their roles and responsibilities.

### III. CARING FOR THE PUBLIC DURING AN EVACUATION

#### GOVERNORS SHOULD:

- Establish clear shelter management policies or executive orders regarding shelter activation, management, responsibilities, reimbursement, and statewide capability;
- Understand the role that NGOs play in operating and supporting shelters during an evacuation;
- Develop plans for the longer-term sheltering of populations displaced by large-scale or catastrophic disasters;
- Ensure that evacuation and sheltering plans contain provisions for ensuring the safe evacuation of special-needs and vulnerable populations; and
- Work with their state emergency management agency to ensure that all state evacuation plans comply with relevant FEMA policies and reimbursement guidelines.

#### OVERVIEW

When residents are evacuated from their homes, sheltering and mass care are required. Mass care and sheltering include feeding, emergency first aid care, distribution of emergency relief items, and disaster welfare information services. Governors should be familiar with their state's sheltering plan, roles, responsibilities, and reimbursement procedures.

Providing shelters for evacuees is a complex operation that requires collaboration among a wide range of organizations, timely decisions by local officials, and coordinated implementation among NGOs, the private sector, and various levels of government. Those involved in this process must balance the challenge of providing services with the urgency of meeting basic human needs.

Governors should establish or ensure clear shelter management policies or executive orders regarding shelter activation, management, agency responsibilities, and statewide capability. Policies should designate state agency roles and responsibilities in:

- ◆ Activating shelters;
- ◆ Establishing and maintaining shelter management capability and annual training;
- ◆ Identifying and maintaining shelter capacity;
- ◆ Providing logistical support for shelter activations (feeding, blankets, cots, hygiene kits, evacuee transportation, and other equipment); and
- ◆ Developing strategies for incorporating Functional and Access Needs guidance.

Those policies (or memoranda of understanding) should also define how the state will reimburse local governments and NGOs for shelter activities after the state requests support for a shelter operation. If policies are not in place or are not followed, reimbursement from FEMA Public Assistance might be jeopardized.

Shelters serve multiple purposes. Not only do they provide temporary refuge, but they also offer a place for families and households to regroup, register for disaster assistance, and obtain updates regarding damages, casualties, and response and recovery efforts specific to their community. Shelters provide access to disaster recovery services that can help meet the immediate needs of individuals and households while the community responds to the disaster and begins the recovery process. Shelters also provide a touch point for mental health disaster teams to provide services to individuals in crisis.

Sheltering is typically conducted at the local level by NGOs working closely with the local government. Additional support is provided by the state and, if necessary, the federal government for larger disasters. A key organization in providing sheltering is the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross maintains shelter agreements with more than 50,000 facilities nationwide. The organization works closely with state and local governments to monitor the need for shelters and to support activation requests. It supports shelter operations with staff and other resources and also works to identify “spontaneous” shelters to ensure that they are appropriately resourced. Some states, such as Alabama, have developed their own state-level shelter strategy. In Alabama, the state’s two-year college system is used as a shelter network—it was activated to support the Hurricane Gustav evacuation in 2009.

In most cases, shelter residents are able to return home within a short time or locate other housing on their own. However, in large-scale or catastrophic disasters, longer-term sheltering may be required. As soon as shelters open, officials must begin working to address longer-term housing needs, ensuring that individuals can either return home or transition to interim or permanent housing. Shelters are not designed for, nor should they be used for, extended periods. Typically, shelters should be able to operate for 8 to 10 days.<sup>15</sup>

After that period, longer-term solutions should be implemented to better serve citizens who cannot return home. In some cases, states should work with FEMA and hotel and motel associations to find vacancies that can be used for longer-term housing. States should also have detailed recovery housing plans in place to support longer-term shelter and housing needs for large-scale disasters.

Several shelter standards and policies offer guidance. The American Red Cross’ Standards for Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection (ARC 4496) establishes hurricane shelter safety criteria.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, shelter operations should incorporate the Department of Justice and FEMA Functional and Access Needs Shelter Support (FNSS) guidance and be established and operated in accordance with FEMA’s Safe Room Shelter and Public Assistance Policy.<sup>17</sup>

FEMA’s guidance says that “children and adults requiring FNSS may have physical, sensory, mental health, or cognitive intellectual disabilities affecting their ability to function independently without assistance.” It also says that pregnant women, elders, and people needing bariatric equipment may benefit from FNSS. Shelter plans should enable adults and children who do not require skilled medical care to maintain their

15 U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Disaster Housing Strategy (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009).

16 American Red Cross, “Standards for Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection,” ARC 4496 (2002): <http://www.floridadisaster.org/Response/engineers/documents/2008SESP/2008-SESP-AppxC.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2014).

17 FEMA, “Design and Construction Guidance for Community Safe Rooms,” FEMA P-361 (2008): <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/3140?id=1657> (accessed October 7, 2014).

usual level of independence in general population shelters. Current law requires all jurisdictions to account for dietary needs, bathing and toileting needs, medical and dental services, service animals, quiet areas, medication, communication needs, mental health services, and transportation needs.

FNSS enable individuals to function independently in general population shelters through the provision of: reasonable modification to policies, practices, and procedures; durable medical equipment; consumable medical supplies; personal assistance services; and other goods and services as needed.

State emergency managers and shelter planners can incorporate *FEMA Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters* to meet access and functional needs in general population shelters.<sup>18</sup> Compliance with these policies and guidance documents will help to properly establish shelter management capability statewide and ensure cost recovery after a declared disaster.

### GOOD SAMARITAN SHELTERS

Experience has taught governors that some NGOs, such as churches, will open their facilities as shelters in an unplanned or uncoordinated manner. These impromptu shelters are often referred to as Good Samaritan shelters. Governors are encouraged to assign a department, office, or agency to coordinate with organizations attempting to operate such shelters. Those shelters are not typically managed or staffed by the American Red Cross and assume all liability if their facility is damaged or evacuees sustain injuries there. Without an established MOU or other legal authority, impromptu shelters are not likely to receive FEMA Public Assistance reimbursement.

Finally, to establish adequate shelter management capacity, governors should understand population demographics and shelter demand for various communities and types of evacuations. For example, income level is typically highly correlated with a citizen's need for shelter support. Once evacuation zones are established, states could conduct a survey of the citizens in each zone to determine shelter demand so that proper levels of managed shelter capacity can be established for different scenarios. Additionally, it is important to maintain a strong management capability, including a roster of trained shelter managers, to avoid shortfalls during prolonged evacuations. Agreements with NGOs such as the American Red Cross can help fill this need.

### EVACUATING AND SHELTERING SPECIAL NEEDS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

In addition to considering individuals with functional and access needs, evacuation and shelter plans must include strategies to support populations such as those who do not have their own transportation, senior citizens, and non-English speakers. Plans should also address people in hospitals and assisted-living facilities. Because it is resource-intensive, time-consuming, and often dangerous to move their residents, evacuating hospitals and assisted-living facilities should be an option of last resort. Instead, these facilities should think about structural mitigation and develop shelter-in-place procedures.

**Senior Citizens.** Governors should be aware of any laws that guide or mandate responsibility for the evacuation of assisted-living facilities and privately owned nursing homes. During Hurricane Floyd in 1999, despite laws in place outlining evacuation responsibilities for those institutions, many assisted-living facilities did not have workable or complete evacuation plans.

<sup>18</sup> FEMA, "Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters," (2010): [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss_guidance.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2014).

As a result, senior citizens did not have access to transportation to evacuate.<sup>19</sup> Governors should designate an agency responsible for checking plans to make sure they are realistic and executable. As mentioned above, hospitals and assisted-living facilities should be encouraged to consider mitigation steps to reduce the need to evacuate.

One of the most vulnerable populations during large-scale evacuations is senior citizens. A post-Hurricane Katrina report estimated that out of 1,400 deaths in New Orleans, 85 percent of the victims were over the age of 50, 60 percent were older than 65, and almost half were older than 75.<sup>20</sup> Older individuals are more likely to stay in their homes rather than evacuate. It is recommended that governors use messages that are designed both to increase senior citizens' confidence in evacuating and to promote preparedness. Seniors are more likely to evacuate if they can share a ride with a family member, trusted friend, or neighbor.

Despite the best coordination efforts of state, local, and federal government, several major challenges remain. For example, most planning focuses on citizens who can drive out of an area on major highways. However, significant numbers of people in urban areas rely on public transportation and do not own an automobile. Planning for citizens using public transportation and leaving an area on foot has to be considered as well.

**Children.** Children are another population demographic that should be considered in disaster and evacuation planning. For example, in the event of no-notice events such as tornadoes, children might be in child care centers or schools when an evacuation occurs. During the 2013 tornado that struck Moore, Oklahoma, among the hardest-hit areas were two public schools. At one of the schools, 75 children and staff were present when the tornado struck. Neither of the schools had storm shelters, and structural deficiencies left the buildings unable to withstand the storm. Educating children about natural disasters and other hazards and what they should expect during a disaster or an evacuation will help reduce panic and prepare the community.

A guide prepared by Save the Children's Domestic Emergencies Unit provides a framework to assist in the planning of emergency management practices that take into account children's needs on the state, local, and national levels.<sup>21</sup> With appropriate planning and guidance, emergency management agencies can minimize the risks faced by children and address the needs of children during the evacuation and longer-term recovery.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP) Communities.** When devising state preparedness plans, officials should consider communities where language barriers may impede successful communication of information. Many communities with large populations of Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents are at a disadvantage in a crisis. LEP individuals who may be poor and have low levels of education most likely do not have access to the information related to an evacuation.

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19 David Firestone, "Hurricane Floyd: The City; Slowly and Testily, Savannah Empties," *New York Times*, September 15, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/15/us/hurricane-floyd-the-city-slowly-and-testily-savannah-empties.html> (accessed October 7, 2014).

20 Sebastian N. Jonkman et al., "Loss of Life Caused by the Flooding of New Orleans After Hurricane Katrina: Analysis of the Relationship Between Flood Characteristics and Mortality," *Risk Analysis* 29 (May 2009): 695.

21 Save the Children, Domestic Emergencies Unit, "The Unique Needs of Children in Emergencies: A Guide for the Inclusion of Children in Emergency Operations Plans," Save the Children (2007).

For example, Southern California urban areas have a large foreign-born population; the strong likelihood of a large-scale disaster necessitates that policy makers and emergency service organizations focus on assessing the needs of this community.<sup>22</sup>

Children in those communities can play a crucial role in communicating the risk and the details of preparedness plans to their LEP parents. Children bring home disaster-preparedness information from school and share that information with their families. State emergency and evacuation information should also be communicated in a clear and easy-to-understand manner, recognizing that in some instances children or adolescents are responsible for relaying this information to their parents.

**Pets.** Household pets are often seen as part of the family, and many times people will not evacuate and leave their pets behind. Governors should work with their departments of agriculture and emergency management to ensure that evacuation plans include accommodating pets. Citizens are more likely to heed evacuation warning orders if they are confident their pet can accompany them on public transportation or at a shelter. Governors should consider setting up household pet shelters and tracking systems to reunite pets with their owners.

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<sup>22</sup> Ann Bessie Mathew and Kimiko Kelly, "Disaster Preparedness in Urban Immigrant Communities: Lessons Learned from Recent Catastrophic Events and Their Relevance to Latino and Asian Communities in Southern California," Tomás Rivera Policy Institute and Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2008).

#### IV. GETTING BACK HOME: ACTIONS GOVERNORS SHOULD TAKE AFTER AN EVACUATION

##### GOVERNORS SHOULD:

- Understand the dynamics of and plan for the reentry of evacuated residents and the repopulation of evacuated areas;
- Plan for reentry and repopulation early in the evacuation planning process;
- Ensure that reentry and repopulation planning is done in coordination with local and tribal governments; and
- Support reopening schools and local businesses as soon as possible.

Planning for the return of citizens to an evacuated area is just as important as planning for the evacuation itself. Allowing citizens to return to an area quickly, but safely is imperative for helping residents return to normalcy and reducing the downtime of vital businesses and services that sustain a community. However, governors or local leaders must establish citizen expectations regarding levels of services and safety precautions to take when returning to damaged communities. Governors can do this by developing a well-communicated and phased approach to repopulation and reentry. Toward that end, one of the lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy was the importance of working with local school districts in establishing a plan and threshold to ensure that schools are reopened as soon as possible.

Repopulation is defined as allowing residents of a community to permanently return to their homes. Sometimes it will be appropriate to establish reentry before repopulation can be achieved, while other times only repopulation is required. States may use different terms to describe “repopulation.” For example, reentry is typically defined as temporarily allowing residents back into specific sections of a severely damaged community to gather personal belongings, assess home damage, and perform repairs, typically for a few hours each day. Before that happens, however, states might need to assist local communities in replacing basic reference points such as street signs and establishing security perimeters.

After a disaster, a community can be severely damaged, with roadways and critical infrastructure unable to support the evacuated population returning en masse. Furthermore, financial and commercial services—such as banks, gas stations, and grocery stores—may not be fully operational. Additionally, some evacuees may have to travel through heavily damaged communities to reach their homes. Therefore, before governors and local government officials allow citizens to return to an area, they should coordinate with local businesses and with contiguous counties that also may have sustained damage.

In **New Jersey** following Superstorm Sandy, infrastructure was badly damaged on the barrier islands. There was no electricity, water, or sewer service, and gas lines were ruptured. Only after local authorities alleviated immediate threats, established a heavy police and fire presence, and determined it was safe for residents to return for a limited number of hours during the day did the governor approve a re-entry plan. No one was permitted to stay overnight. Residents had to show proof of home ownership and then were issued a decal for their car. Residents were restricted to driving only to and from their property.



Contractors had to be escorted by the homeowner. No pedestrian traffic was allowed since public infrastructure was still being repaired. It was not until key infrastructure was restored that the governor approved a repopulation plan. Governors should work to understand the existing authority that allows them to control or keep citizens away from their homes after a disaster. In many states, this authority either does not exist or is rarely exercised.

Governors are encouraged to learn from repopulation events such as Hurricane Sandy and establish a pre-event methodology for controlling re-entry access to heavily damaged areas. At a minimum, governors should consider re-entry and repopulation plans early in the evacuation planning process and coordinate with local officials to determine when it is safe to allow citizens to return to their homes. Considerations include supporting infrastructure and police and fire protection, as well as other critical workers. Finally, governors should consider establishing security protocols for re-entry into a community after a catastrophic event.

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## NGA CENTER DIVISIONS

The NGA Center is organized into five divisions with some collaborative projects across all divisions. The NGA Center provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff across a range of policy issues.

- **Economic, Human Services & Workforce** covers economic development and innovation, workforce development focused on industry-based strategies; pathways to employment and populations with special needs; and human services for children, youth, low-income families and people with disabilities.
- **Education** focuses on helping governors develop effective policy and support its implementation in the areas of early education, readiness, and quality; the Common Core State Standards, Science Technology Engineering and Math, and related assessments; teacher and leader effectiveness; competency-based learning; charter schools; data and accountability; and postsecondary (higher education and workforce training) access, success, productivity, accountability, and affordability. The division also works on policy issues related to bridging the system divides among the early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems.
- **Environment, Energy & Transportation** focuses on several issues, including improving energy efficiency, enhancing the use of both traditional and alternative fuels for electricity and transportation, developing a modern electricity grid, expanding economic development opportunities in the energy sector, protecting and cleaning up the environment, exploring innovative financing mechanisms for energy and infrastructure, and developing a transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people and goods.
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