



1. What's the scope of national preparedness?

National preparedness is our capacity to effectively assess and manage risk throughout the nation. Specifically, it is our ability to reduce vulnerability to all hazards and cope with all disasters whether small, large, or catastrophic. The scope of national preparedness can be described as broad and deep, as it encompasses the activities at local, tribal, state, and Federal levels and a national preparedness system that should align and integrate these efforts.

2. Should our approach be based on the “all hazards” approach that emphasizes capabilities or on a specific list of scenarios that represent the greatest threats?

The only logical and effective approach which maximizes capability and integrates efforts is one which emphasizes the functional capabilities to deal with the consequences common to most disasters. Under this approach, it is the consequence, not the cause that is important. Lives must be saved, the injured attended to, the infrastructure restored, order maintained – these functions have to be accomplished regardless of cause.

In order to effectively achieve this integration of resources and efforts, all hazards must be considered as part of a thorough risk assessment evaluating impact and likelihood of occurrence. This approach allows us to address the specific preparedness efforts required by unique hazards while strengthening the functions common to most disasters. The priority given to each can only be identified through a comprehensive risk assessment.

While scenario-based planning is a useful tool for conducting specific planning efforts and exercises, its application is limited. Utilizing a list of scenarios (regardless of the exhaustiveness of the list) can potentially skew our preparedness efforts to only address a limited number of specific hazards, compromising our ability to consider and aptly prepare for the wide range of situations our nation needs to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from. Focusing on the cause rather than the impact tends to detract from a jurisdiction's ability to see the “big picture” and accomplish integrated preparedness planning.

3. How should the National Preparedness Goal be organized? (by the current four missions: Prevent, Protect, Respond, Recover or in some other way?) How should we consider long-term recovery?

The current homeland security missions are a deviation from the four phases of the emergency management cycle, first defined in the Comprehensive Emergency Management Model¹. The four phases of emergency management are mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

¹ National Governors' Association. *1978 Emergency Preparedness Project: Final Report*. Washington, DC: NGA, 1978.

Mitigation consists of those activities designed to prevent or reduce losses from disaster. It is usually considered the initial phase of emergency management, although it may be a component of other phases.

Preparedness is focused on the development of plans and capabilities for effective disaster response.

Response is the immediate reaction to a disaster. It may occur as the disaster is anticipated, as well as soon after it begins.

Recovery consists of those activities that continue beyond the emergency period to restore critical community functions and manage reconstruction.²

The current homeland security missions replaces “mitigation” with “Prevent” and “Protect,” assumedly to emphasize the importance of mitigating terrorism. While prevention and protection are components of mitigation, the combination of the two does not equal mitigation. Mitigation also includes activities focused on reducing the impact of disasters such as public education and awareness, land use planning, real estate disclosure, developing, adopting and enforcing effective building codes, storm water management, etc. And it is mitigation that seems to be left out from grants, programs, etc. (or not given the prominence that it should have), when it really has the potential to have a great impact on the outcomes of disasters.

While the four phases of emergency management seem to establish the best framework to organize our preparedness efforts, replacing “prevent” with “mitigate” in the homeland security missions would be more helpful than the current homeland security missions (prevent, protect, respond, recover).

4. How should the Nation set policy priorities and strategies for national preparedness? (specifically, the use of presidential directives and national strategies) What’s the most effective way of getting state and local input into policy priorities and strategies?

National preparedness policy priorities and strategies should be focused on developing and maintaining our ability to reduce vulnerability to hazards and increasing capability and capacity to cope with disasters throughout the nation. Utilizing the principles of emergency management may also assist in guiding the development of national preparedness policies:

- **Comprehensive** – consider and take into account all hazards, all phases (missions), all stakeholders and all impacts relevant to disasters.
- **Progressive** – anticipate future disasters and take preventive and preparatory measures to build disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient communities.
- **Risk-Driven** – use sound risk management principles (hazard identification, risk analysis, and impact analysis) in assigning priorities and resources.
- **Integrated** – ensure unity of effort among all levels of government and all elements of a community.

² William L. Waugh, Jr. *Living with Hazards, Dealing with Disasters: An Introduction to Emergency Management*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.

- **Collaborative** – create and sustain broad and sincere relationships among individuals and organizations to encourage trust, advocate a team atmosphere, build consensus, and facilitate communication.
- **Coordinated** – synchronize the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose.
- **Flexible** – use creative and innovative approaches in solving disaster challenges.
- **Professional** – value a science and knowledge-based approach based on education, training, experience, ethical practice, public stewardship and continuous improvement. (Attached is a copy of a more extensive monograph which outlines these principles in more detail.)

5. How should the National Preparedness Goal be structured, given our decentralized, federal form of government? How do we organize the Goal to:

a. show who needs what level of preparedness, and why?

b. focus efforts on a 'critical few' specific, flexible and measureable objectives?

c. tie objectives to guidance for the resources (plans, organization, equipment, training, exercises/operations) needed?

Developing and maintaining a national preparedness system that supports, aligns, and integrates efforts at the local, tribal, state, and federal levels to evaluate and manage risk effectively will establish a solid framework from which all preparedness activities can be initiated. Creating a system that is flexible enough to accommodate the priorities and strategies of local, tribal, state, and federal governments as well as the private sector will be a critical factor in establishing a workable and sustainable system. Within the established structure, each level of government should have an opportunity to evaluate and manage risk in ways that are meaningful and productive for their jurisdiction while ensuring their approach is aligned with the broader concepts and principles of the National Goal. This system needs to acknowledge the primary responsibility of local governments and strengthen their preparedness for emergencies and disasters within the United States.

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