

FAQ

NATIONAL DISASTER HOUSING STRATEGY

Date: January 16, 2009

Contact: News Desk

202-646-4600

What does the National Disaster Housing Strategy offer?

The Strategy sets a new course in disaster housing for the Nation. The Strategy describes disaster housing in its three elements of sheltering, interim housing and permanent housing and draws on best practices and the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and other disasters to identify specific actions that can be taken to improve disaster housing assistance.

The Strategy clarifies roles at the federal, state and local level to match the responsibilities at each level and describes as well the responsibilities of individuals, non-government organizations and the private sector. The Strategy calls for continuous attention to disaster housing issues, places a renewed focus on planning, and the building of baseline capabilities for governments, individuals, non-governmental organizations and the private sector and advocates a broader range of disaster housing options.

Is this a Federal Strategy?

No. This is a National Strategy that invites participation from all levels of government, individuals, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Who developed the Strategy?

The Strategy is the combined effort of numerous federal and state agencies, volunteer organizations, private sector businesses and individuals.

Why is the final Strategy being rushed through now?

We are sensitive to the Congressional and emergency management view that this document is late and FEMA has consistently informed all concerned that we are moving forward as expeditiously as possible to complete it before the end of this administration. We view the requirement to develop this strategy, as stated in PKEMRA, to be the responsibility of this administration to complete as we have endeavored to complete the more than 200 recommendations and requirements of the act these past two years.

Does the National Disaster Housing Strategy address all of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) requirements?

Yes. The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) required the development of a National Disaster Housing Strategy. PKEMRA called for FEMA, in coordination with key housing stakeholders, to develop, coordinate, and maintain a *National Disaster Housing Strategy*. It also called for a number of specific issues to be addressed within the *Strategy*, including an overview of existing disaster housing efforts and programs. To address these requirements, the *Strategy* has been developed in two parts.

Part 1: Building a National Strategy

DRAFT

Part 1 included development and public review of a draft national strategy that included a vision, goals, and direction that the broad range of disaster housing stakeholders could support. While there are many approaches to strategic planning, there are common core elements that help focus planning efforts and increase the likelihood of success. Effective strategies define the desired end-state or vision, include goals that describe how that vision will be achieved, and identify the means or resources to achieve those goals, such as skills, knowledge/expertise, organizational structures, tools, management or data systems, and funding. This *Strategy* builds on these elements,

While strategies are traditionally viewed as the longer term plans that define actions to achieve a desired end-state or vision, national strategies must also provide an overarching framework that can enable multiple organizations with different missions and authorities to work together to achieve a common vision and goals. The public review and comment period was vital and provided good feedback to refine the *Strategy*, which is critical since the most effective strategies typically reflect the communities they serve and are clear and easy to understand by those who must act on them.

Similar to other national strategies, this *Strategy* will be supported by a national implementation plan, which will be developed jointly with stakeholders. The implementation plan will describe specific actions, timelines, and performance measures to achieve the national goals.

Part 2: Completing the Review and Cataloging Summaries of Existing Disaster Housing Efforts and Programs

Part 2 consisted of working with a broad range of stakeholders and disaster housing partners to complete a series of annexes that summarize current disaster housing efforts and programs. These annexes, which follow the additional requirements in PKEMRA to address specific issues, provide a wealth of information to inform future efforts and help to ensure that we build upon current programs and address critical issues. These annexes include an overview of disaster housing programs, methods to house disaster victims near employment and other resources, programs for special needs and low-income populations, disaster housing group site operations, programs to repair or rehabilitate rental housing, authorities, and guidance on assistance available under the Stafford Act.

How will the National Disaster Housing Strategy be implemented?

The Strategy includes a chapter that describes how the National Disaster Housing Strategy will be implemented to achieve the vision and goals. Below are some of the key implementation concepts:

- ***Focus full-time national attention on disaster housing to improve sheltering, interim housing, and permanent housing efforts.*** To accomplish this, FEMA will establish a **National Disaster Housing Joint Task Force**, comprised of Federal employees. *The existing FEMA National Advisory Council will be requested to provide recommendations from a broad range of disaster housing stakeholders to FEMA and the Joint Task Force.*
- ***Support and build State and local disaster housing preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.*** Based on best practices from across the Nation, this *Strategy* encourages States to continue to build proactive disaster housing capabilities. When a disaster strikes or threatens that may require victims to be temporarily housed or permanently relocated, the State is encouraged to convene a **State-led Disaster Housing Task Force** that brings together housing experts from all levels of government, non-governmental, and the private sector to tailor housing plans to meet the needs of that particular disaster.

- ***Foster the development of operational plans that support disaster housing response and recovery operations across all levels.*** Concerted planning efforts and effective cooperation among stakeholders is vital during disaster response and recovery. To improve these efforts, we must develop national disaster housing planning guidance that includes clear, well-thought-out planning assumptions and guidelines. Such planning will entail identifying requirements, assessing capabilities to determine gaps, and taking specific actions to close or mitigate those gaps. This effort must include the development of a **National Disaster Housing Concept of Operations** that integrates and synchronizes existing capabilities across all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. All organizations involved should develop detailed operational plans and consistent implementation protocols.
- ***Build local, tribal, State, and Federal disaster housing baseline capabilities.*** Conducting more effective disaster housing response and recovery operations will require all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and individuals to, at a minimum, meet baseline capabilities that align with fundamental responsibilities and roles. This will require an assessment of current capabilities, developing engaged partnerships, and making additional investments in preparedness activities, including planning, organizing, equipping, training, exercising, and evaluating efforts to improve.
- ***Work collectively to achieve the vision and goals within the Strategy.*** The Nation must move from theory to practice by providing objectives, milestones, and metrics that will mark progress toward achieving the goals outlined in this *Strategy*. This will include developing and tracking disaster housing efforts against a **National Implementation Plan**.

Why did it take FEMA so long to release this Strategy?

Since PKEMRA there have been a number of changes to disaster housing and many key issues had to be resolved. Among them, FEMA published the National Response Framework in January 2008, which forms the basis for the National Disaster Housing Strategy. FEMA also was focused on addressing the formaldehyde levels in trailers as a clear and pressing priority, and in the midst of the disaster recovery efforts arising from the Midwest floods.

Following an extension to the 60-day comment period, FEMA carefully considered the nearly 500 comments received, implementing or incorporating approximately 83% of those comments. The Strategy received comments from individuals, industry representatives, associations, and State and local government representatives. Our staff spent the next months adjudicating these comments and seeking additional guidance and direction from our stakeholders in order to address these concerns and comments.

In addition, we also convened working groups to review and finalizing the more detailed annexes, which address critical disaster housing issues. These seven annexes are compilations of the ongoing activities, programs and research in support of disaster housing. Finally, the Strategy involved a wide range of partners, each of whom have a stake in the outcome, in a collaborative effort.

At the same time, FEMA was heavily engaged in the disaster recovery efforts of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Is the Strategy written in stone?

No. The Strategy has a broad scope that enables it to be a living document, with built in flexibility to adjust and work with its recommendations as circumstances and needs change.

Does the National Disaster Housing Strategy address the use of travel trailers?

Yes, though FEMA will not normally consider travel trailers for interim housing in declared disasters. FEMA will only consider use of travel trailer at the request of the state in extraordinary disaster conditions, when no other form of interim housing is available.

Where can I find more information on the National Disaster Housing Strategy?

Learn more at www.fema.gov. Next week, FEMA will release an online National Disaster Housing Resource Center, which includes each of the annexes and provides current resources for disaster housing efforts.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

###