

Damage Assessment Process

In order to seek supplemental disaster recovery assistance following a disaster, usually a natural disaster such as a tornado or flooding, the affects of the disaster must be identified and quantified. Before discussing the types of assistance that may be available to recover from a disaster, the process to determine the affects of a disaster need to be discussed. The focus this week for the Disaster recovery branch will be the damage assessment process.

Damage assessment is the systematic process of determining and appraising the extent of loss, suffering and /or harm to a community resulting from a natural or human-made disaster. Damage assessment identifies the impact and quantifies the severity of the event on local governments, people and businesses. This process determines the who, what, where, when and how of a disaster.

Damage assessment is conducted immediately following the disaster by local teams. These teams need to be divided into two types, public and private damage assessment teams, under the direction of a Damage assessment Coordinator who should be located in the county's Emergency Operations Center. Private damage assessment teams will survey damages to individuals, families and businesses and identify the extent or degree of damage to homes and businesses; provide an estimate of insurance coverage for the damages; and provide any additional information such as number of unemployed because of the disaster, etc.

Public damage assessment teams will assess the impact on the local infrastructure. These teams need to work closely with the county engineer to collect information on damages to publicly and private non-profit facilities. These teams will assess the impact to roads, bridges, publicly owned facilities such as water treatment and control facilities, publicly and private non-profit buildings and educational facilities.

Damage Assessment information is critical for decision-makers. Accurate and timely damage assessment will provide decision-makers with information needed to determine where to allocate emergency response resources. Damage assessment serves as the basis for decision-makers to request supplemental assistance from the state and/or federal government. Damage assessment information, which identifies the cause(s) of the disaster, can provide information that will assist with identifying potential hazard mitigation projects. Information acquired by damage assessment should be shared with the public and should help to keep it accurately informed about the event. Damage assessment must be conducted in order to request supplemental assistance from the state and federal disaster assistance programs.

Accurate and timely damage assessment information is critical to the response and recovery efforts for individuals, families, businesses and local government. Staff from the Disaster Recovery Branch is available to provide training for Damage Assessment.