

Water Sector Response:

Key Activities when Engaging Federal Partners

Overview: This plan is for the case when incidents exceed local, WARN, and tribal capacities in the water sector. The responsible party is listed for each key activity, but all partners are expected to positively engage in these activities.

Communication is Key (utilities, Tribal Emergency Management, Region 9 Tribal Drinking Water Program, other federal partners): Allocate resources to maintain communication with disaster response partners. Update all partners on the operational status of utility services. While it might be instinctive to focus solely on repairs, when incidents surpass local capacities, shift resources to provide information to federal partners. Organize reporting to ensure consistent information dissemination. Request assistance for assessment and reporting as needed. Regular updates help response partners to direct resources to support service restoration.

Water Task Force (utilities, Tribal Emergency Management, Region 9 Tribal Drinking Water, other federal partners): Team comprised of utility leaders with tribal ER and federal response agencies to ensure comprehensive needs are met. Key goals include:

1. Sharing daily operational status and critical information.
2. Involving all impacted agencies/entities.
3. Formulating complete resource requests to FEMA via tribal emergency management.
4. Making decisions, dividing tasks, and executing plans.
5. Repeating the process with regular meetings, initially daily, reducing frequency as the response progresses.

FEMA Disaster Declarations and Mission Assignments (federal partners): Once disaster declarations are approved, FEMA issues mission assignments to federal and partner agencies. Ensure resource requests are comprehensive to restore utility services. FEMA assigns response agencies based on expertise and capacity, following the National Response Framework (NRF). Emergency Support Function 3 (ESF-3) focuses on public works and engineering, including water and wastewater utilities. The US Army Corps of Engineers leads ESF-3, with the EPA as a support agency for the water sector.

