

Fact Sheet

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NATIONWIDE PLAN REVIEW

Assessing Catastrophic Planning Nationwide

The *Nationwide Plan Review*, the most comprehensive assessment of catastrophic planning yet undertaken in this country, was designed and conducted by the Department of Homeland Security in conjunction with all 56 U.S. States and Territories and 75 of the nation's largest urban areas. The assessment consisted of two phases and was conducted in just over six months.

A Comprehensive, Peer-Validated, Review

The two-phase methodology consisted of a self-assessment by States and urban areas of their own emergency operation plans, followed by an expert peer review. Both phases focused on whether emergency operations plans were sufficient for managing a catastrophic event. The Phase 1 Report, issued February 10, 2006, was compiled using self-assessment data received from States and urban areas. For Phase 2, Peer Review Teams comprised of 77 former State and local homeland security and emergency management officials visited every State and 75 urban areas to review and validate the self-assessments. In total, the Phase 2 teams spoke with 1,086 public safety and homeland security officials and reviewed 2,757 emergency operations plans and related documents. The Phase 2 Report reflects findings from both phases of the Nationwide Plan Review.

No Impact on Homeland Security Grants Program

The 2006 Homeland Security Grant Awards and the Nationwide Plan Review are separate initiatives. The Nationwide Plan Review did not examine the grant applications or awards for any State or urban area. Nor did its findings influence State or urban area grant applications, since the assessment was not completed until after State and urban areas had submitted their grant applications to DHS for review. While States and urban areas are strongly encouraged to review the findings and develop corrective actions, FY06 grant awards will not be adjusted based on the findings of the Nationwide Plan Review.

More Emphasis on Catastrophic Planning Needed

Planners and emergency management officials at all levels of government are working to strengthen plans and formalize mutual aid agreements. Existing plans and capabilities serve the nation well for the events most common in the United States. However, the review found that disaster planning for catastrophic events in the United States suffers from outmoded planning processes, products, and tools. Plans are not coordinated in a systematic fashion and fail to account for the scope of catastrophic events that could potentially occur. The Review outlines 15 initial conclusions for States and urban areas and

24 for the Federal government. Most focus on the need to make specific improvements in plans and to modernize national planning efforts (see attached list of initial conclusions).

The conclusions for States and urban areas include the need for coordination of planning across jurisdictions and levels of government; evacuation; special needs populations; plans for continuity of operations and continuity of government; assuring a command structure; patient tracking; resource management; and both operational and public communications.

The conclusions for the Federal government are focused on providing the tools to build a shared national homeland security planning system; strengthening collaboration and coordination; improving emergency communications; creating incentives for planning and planning excellence; strengthening regional planning capabilities; and developing a common reference system.

Review Summaries

The Nationwide Plan Review process analyzed whether existing emergency plans for States and urban areas are sufficient for managing a catastrophic event. State and urban area summaries reflect the following three assessment levels:

- **Sufficient:** Plans comply with Federal guidance and could meet the requirements of a catastrophic incident.
- **Partially Sufficient:** Plans partially comply with Federal guidance and could meet some, but not all, requirements of a catastrophic incident.
- **Not Sufficient:** Plans were not in place at the time of the Review that were compliant with applicable Federal guidance and could not meet the requirements of a catastrophic incident.

Planning Modernization

The report acknowledges that a strong majority of States and urban areas are already undertaking initiatives to modernize and strengthen existing catastrophic plans. DHS will work collaboratively with States and urban areas to improve plans, support training and exercise initiatives, and engage in discussions on how to meet the catastrophic planning challenges identified in the final Report. The goal remains that communities and states, along with the federal government, possess strong emergency plans that unite national efforts in response to catastrophic disasters. The Department's Undersecretary for Preparedness has established a National Preparedness Task Force to oversee planning modernization and act on specific conclusions. The Task Force will bring together DHS preparedness policy, planning, exercise, evaluation, and field management assets to offer comprehensive solutions to homeland security challenges.

The purpose of the Nationwide Plan Review was to assess the aggregate status of planning at the national level and identify actions to strengthen catastrophic planning. The Department provided participating jurisdictions with detailed individual reports and has encouraged participating States, Territories, and urban areas to translate the findings and conclusions into specific, corrective actions.

Catastrophic incidents by their very nature cut across geographic and political boundaries. Emergency planning must be empowered to collaborate across those boundaries, within a comprehensive and interrelated system. The initial conclusions in this report reflect an understanding that coordinated planning for catastrophic events is of crucial importance to the safety and security of our Nation whether we are preventing and protecting or responding and recovering.

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