

CRS Insights

Preparing for Disasters: FEMA's New National Preparedness Report Released
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The United States is exposed to risk from numerous hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, viral pandemics, and technical hazards such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To help reduce this risk, Congress requires the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop national policies on how the nation can better prepare for all hazards. These policy and planning requirements are primarily found in the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA; [P.L. 109-295](#)). These legal requirements were reinforced and expanded with additional mandates in President Barack Obama's 2011 [Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness \(PPD-8\)](#).

On August 6, 2014, FEMA released the [3rd annual National Preparedness Report \(NPR\)](#). The annually-developed NPR provides a retrospective analysis of the nation's progress towards achieving the [National Preparedness Goal](#) of:

a secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.

Table 1 summarizes completed preparedness policy documents that have been gradually released by FEMA in fulfillment of PKEMRA and PPD-8 requirements. Many of these policies have precedents before the enactment of PKEMRA. A week before the release of the latest NPR, FEMA published the final National Planning Framework (addressing Protection) and Federal Interagency Operational Plans (FIOPs) to accompany the Frameworks for Prevention, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. The only significant unreleased document is the National Protection Framework's FIOP.

Table 1. Published National Preparedness Policies

Title	Purpose	Related PKEMRA Provision
National Preparedness Goal	Provides the end-state objective for preparedness in the nation. Identifies the 31 core capabilities required to achieve the end-state.	6 U.S.C. §743
National Preparedness System Description	Describes elements of the national preparedness system that are needed to develop and sustain the 31 core capabilities nationally.	6 U.S.C. §744
National Preparedness Report (past version 2012 and version 2013 are also available)	Acts as an annual "status report" assessing the nation's progress towards developing the 31 core capabilities outlined in the National Preparedness Goal.	6 U.S.C. §752
National Planning Frameworks	In general, the five Frameworks provide an overarching strategy for how the whole community can provide the necessary core capabilities for each mission area. They also identify the chief responsibilities and authorities	

of states, local governments, the private and non-profit sectors, and the public in each mission area.

[National Prevention Framework](#)

Encompasses the mission to avoid, prevent, or stop a threatened or actual act of terrorism.

No specific provision, but is an additional PPD-8 requirement.

[National Protection Framework](#)

Encompasses the mission to secure the nation against acts of terrorism, and manmade or natural disasters.

No specific provision, but is an additional PPD-8 requirement.

[National Mitigation Framework](#)

Encompasses the mission to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters.

No specific provision, but is an additional PPD-8 requirement.

[National Response Framework](#)

Encompasses the mission to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs after a disaster.

6 U.S.C. §319

[National Disaster Recovery Framework](#)

Encompasses the mission to assist communities effectively recover from the long-term consequences of a disaster.

6 U.S.C. §771

Federal Interagency Operational Plans (FIOPs) (available documents: [Mitigation](#), [Response](#), and [Recovery](#).

One FIOP to support each of the five National Planning Frameworks. In general, they include a federal concept of operations (CONOPs) on how federal resources, personnel, and authorities will integrate with state/local to build and sustain core capabilities. May also include detailed support function annexes, incident-specific plans, and other support material.

6 U.S.C. §753(b)

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Source: CRS analysis of [P.L. 109-295](#), PPD-8, and hyperlinked component policies.

In the latest assessment of national preparedness, the NPR incorporates an estimated 1,178 data sources with information about national core capabilities. NPR data illustrate, for example, a 41% increase in cyber incident reports to DHS from stakeholders in 2013. The Report also uses self-reported data from expert stakeholders at the state and territorial level to identify the core capabilities requiring the most improvement (such as cybersecurity and post-disaster housing) or to demonstrate relative strength (such as providing on-scene security and protection, and operational communications during incidents). The state-reported data also reveal, in the opinion of those surveyed, what capability gaps the federal government is most responsible for addressing in the future, such as fatality management services. (See [Figure 3](#) of the NPR.)

Issues for Congress

The latest National Preparedness Report and each national preparedness policy described in [Table 1](#) may have broad implications for homeland security. In its oversight of the nation's preparedness for all

hazards, Congress may wish to consider the following:

- Do national preparedness policies conform to the full intent of all PKEMRA legal requirements? For example, in the past, [GAO has critiqued FEMA](#) for lacking quantifiable performance metrics to measure national preparedness capabilities, as is required by PKEMRA (6 U.S.C. §749). If certain requirements have not been met, why not, and are those outstanding requirements pertinent to national preparedness?
 - What effects have the NPR and other national preparedness policies had on the resource allocation decisions of federal, state, and local government officials for homeland security functions? Ultimately, for preparedness policies and the Report to serve a broader purpose, they should influence decision makers as they dedicate future resources to address identified core capability shortcomings and to fulfill their agencies' assigned roles in preparedness frameworks and operational plans.
 - How are roles and responsibilities to federal departments and agencies under the National Planning Frameworks and subsequent FIOPs assigned? These frameworks and plans delegate varied amounts of additional homeland security responsibilities to departments and agencies across the federal government. Are there instances where assigned responsibilities conflict with the broader intent of Congress for each agency's missions? If so, Congress may wish to direct alternative agencies to achieve the stated responsibility.
 - How effective are preparedness policies within each Member's own district or state? What are the overall levels of community preparedness for the unique set of threats faced by each district or state?
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