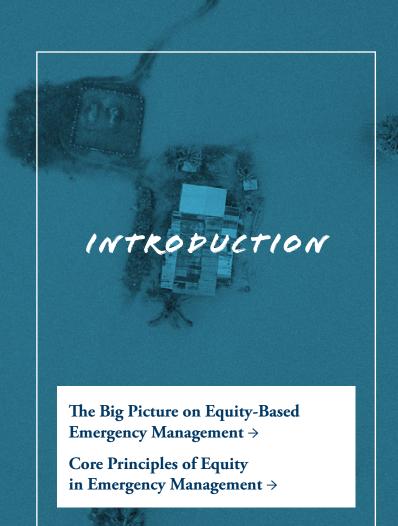NAACP | Counterstream

POWER
IN THE STORM

A People's Guide to Building a Resilient and
Community-Led Disaster Response
NAACP.ORG

INTRODUCTION

The Big Picture on Equity-Based Emergency Management →

Core Principles of Equity in Emergency Management →

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The Big Picture on Equity-Based Emergency Management

As climate change intensifies across the world, communities of color face increasingly severe disasters. Practices such as fossil fuel extraction, redlining, and industrial pollution mean that many Black and other frontline communities are not only more vulnerable to climate emergencies, but also lack the sufficient infrastructure necessary to protect against, and recover from, threats such as sea level rise. Pumping groundwater, for example, can increase sea level rise and induce the risk of disasters.

Disasters can exacerbate existing inequalities, cause illness, and create lasting intergenerational impact. Because of this, it is critical for communities to develop disaster resilience strategies that center community power.

This NAACP Center for Environmental and Climate Justice toolkit is designed with and by local and state leaders to support NAACP units in preparing for, living through, and recovering from disasters with dignity. While we work toward the long-term systemic and societal shifts we need to transform our communities (such as eliminating racism and reimagining our economies), there are some key actions we can and must take now to make our emergency management systems more equitable and just. The purpose of this toolkit is to introduce some of those key steps.

An important part of equity-based emergency management is understanding the relationship between a just transition and disaster resilience. In order to protect our communities from compounding climate crises, we must move away from extraction and domination and toward regeneration and cooperation. Some of the transitions we must make to transform our system include:

✓ Winding down fossil fuel extraction by harnessing sun and wind power

✓ Recovering, reusing, and recycling our waste

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✓ Developing robust systems of local food production that strengthen the soil and support community health

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✓ Acknowledging water as a human right and ensuring access to this precious resource

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✓ Honoring housing in a person's community of choice as a human right by protecting land owned and operated by frontline communities as well as centering climate reparations

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✓ Upholding living wages and workers' rights for all

✓ Centering global peace and unity in our policies

✓ Shifting leadership, ownership, and decision-making power to frontline communities

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THE JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

LEARN MORE

Explore two essential resources from movement allies advancing the shift from an extractive to a regenerative economy.
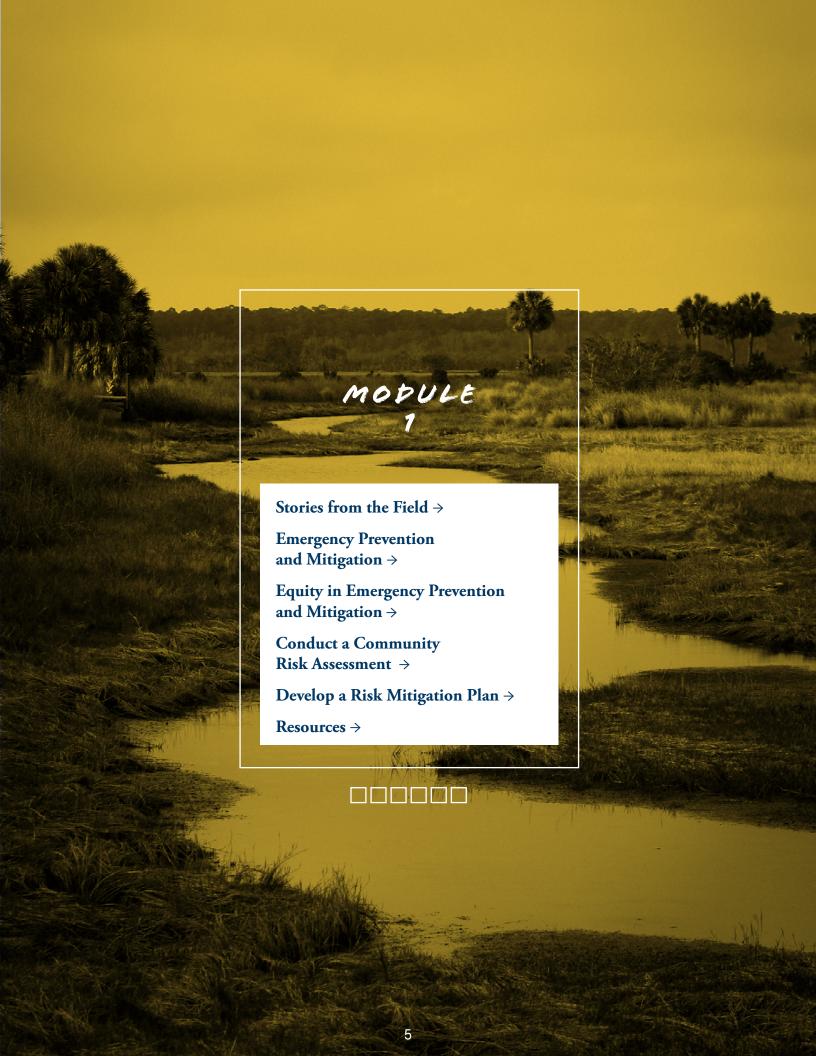
- **Just Transition Principles**
  by the Climate Justice Alliance
  climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition-2

- **From Banks and Tanks to Cooperation and Caring:**
  A Strategic Framework for a Just Transition
  by the Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project
  movementgeneration.org/justtransition

Core Principles of Equity in Emergency Management

As a national advocate for the civil and human rights of communities around the world, the NAACP plays an essential role in ensuring that emergency prevention, preparation, response, and recovery efforts during a disaster are conducted in a just and equitable manner.

Our aims are to:

✓ Ensure that the principles of equity, justice, inclusion, transparency, and accountability govern all aspects of emergency management.

✓ Safeguard civil protections during times of disaster by leveraging international human rights law to shape policy on the federal, state, and local levels.

✓ Uphold peoples' rights to the resources — such as arable land and clean water — needed to not only survive, but also to create productive, dignified, and ecologically sustainable lives.

✓ Design emergency management processes rooted in deep democracy, participatory decision-making, and self-governance.

✓ Develop equitable measures to mitigate and prevent emergencies and disasters.

✓ Recognize that climate justice is an integral part of emergency management by including climate change projections into risk assessment and mitigation.

✓ Embody a spirit of care, cooperation, and collectivism among peoples and communities by integrating practices such as resource sharing and mutual aid into emergency management practices.

✓ Center community leadership across the emergency management continuum by including community-designed planning, response, and recovery practices.

MODULE 1

Stories from the Field

/ "If we don't prioritize this issue,
who can we expect to do it?"

In Florida, rising sea levels and intensifying hurricanes pose a particular threat to Black communities. Despite the impact of climate disaster on communities in Florida, the Bahamas, and the South, mainstream media organizations fail to adequately amplify these issues. Additionally, many people do not have a clear and cogent disaster resilience plan. Creating these plans not only requires community input, but also courage. This is especially important given the need for flexible, resilient, and place-based emergency response practices. Although organizations and agencies like FEMA and the Red Cross still have a role in recovery and relief, disaster resilience plans will require engagement from diverse organizations in order to ensure equitable and immediate support during disasters. It's also critical to ensure that organizers receive continual training in preparedness, and that environmental and climate justice is a central part of the conversation.

Adora Obi Nweze
NAACP Florida State Conference President
and NAACP National Board Member

Emergency Prevention and Mitigation

During this phase of emergency management, the goal is to implement strategies that eliminate the risk of disaster and/or reduce the severity of its impacts. Some examples of prevention and mitigation activities include:

✓ Constructing dams and levees that help prevent flooding

✓ Rebuilding or renovating structures with more resilient materials

✓ Identifying low-lying areas and relocating structures located in floodplains

✓ Implementing zoning rules that restrict construction in floodplains

✓ Expanding natural storage along rivers to reduce flooding risk

Equity in Emergency Prevention and Mitigation

After decades of disinvestment and racist budgeting practices, neighborhoods of color are more likely than white neighborhoods to have broken, outdated, or altogether nonexistent infrastructure.[1] Additionally, frontline communities are more likely to live in hazardous areas and have fewer resources to invest in risk-reducing measures.[2] Taken together, these factors impact some individuals and groups' ability to respond to disaster events.[3]

This is the ongoing cycle of disaster vulnerability—those with less wealth face greater risks and also experience greater impact, further draining their wealth. But risk is not just about money. To have equity in emergency prevention and mitigation, communities must develop risk assessment and mitigation plans that value the safety of *all* people over the prioritization of financial assets.

LEARN MORE

DISASTER MITIGATION AND CLIMATE MIGRATION

Without a community-based resiliency plan for the future, Black and other frontline communities will be more likely to face climate migration. In this conversation, grassroots leaders from ten low-income Black, Latinx, and Native American communities illuminate the connections between equitable emergency response and climate migration.

- **The Great American Climate Migration**
  anthropocenealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/A2_
  The-Great-American-Climate-Migration_ENGLISH.pdf

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KEY ACTION STEPS

In this module, we outline the key steps that NAACP units and other community-based organizations can take to advance equity in emergency prevention and mitigation.

✓ Conduct a community risk assessment

✓ Develop a risk mitigation plan

Conduct a Community Risk Assessment

The first step in emergency prevention and mitigation is to conduct a community risk assessment that can be used across the emergency management continuum to establish preparedness and response priorities. A risk assessment is a series of steps used to identify potential hazards in an area and determine what could happen if those hazards occur. Some states have created their own scans that can serve as potential models for local community assessments.

Examples include:

- **North Carolina**
  The State's Office of Recovery and Resiliency publishes a statewide *Hazard Mitigation Plan* that includes detailed environmental risk profiles and vulnerability analyses.

- **California**
  The California Office of Emergency Services (OES) offers Risk and Security Assessment Programs. Additionally, the Cal OES Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) outlines natural and human-caused hazards and potential impacts to communities.

- **Louisiana**
  Louisiana's Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) offers a strong example of integrating community input into environmental risk planning.

Regardless of whether your state has a risk assessment scan, NAACP units can partner with diverse community-based groups to conduct a scan. In addition to joining your local VOAD chapter (see Module 2 for more), NAACP units can work with groups such as:

- **State and local emergency management offices**
  Each state has a statewide emergency management agency and most cities/towns have a local office. Some of these offices are voluntary, but communities can advocate to have a permanent emergency management person in charge of operations. Emergency management offices on the state and local level will not only be able to provide data/information that will be useful for completing a risk assessment, but can also support the process.

- **Local community colleges or universities**
  A local community college or university may be interested in partnering on completing a risk assessment. Oftentimes students are looking for research or internship projects and may be able to receive credit for helping complete a community risk assessment.

- **Community science projects**
  One way to involve the broader community in the risk assessment process is to turn it into a community science project. These are projects in which community members volunteer to gather data on a specific subject.

As you work together with your community to conduct a risk assessment, it's important to establish shared language. The following terms can help you focus and frame your assessment.

TABLE 1

COMMUNITY ASSETS: The people, structures, facilities, and systems that have value to the community.

HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARD: The threat from a human-caused event that has the potential to negatively impact humans or the environment. Human-caused hazards include disasters such as dam failure, structural collapse, or nuclear reactor accidents. It's important to note that natural disasters can occur more frequently based on human-caused conditions such as fossil fuel use.

IMPACT: The consequences of a hazard on the community and its assets.

NATURAL HAZARD: A threat from naturally occurring events that has the potential to have negative effects on humans or the environment. Natural hazards (and resulting disasters) include earthquakes, landslides, and hurricanes.

RISK: The potential for damage, loss, or other impacts created by the interaction of hazards with community assets.

VULNERABILITY: Characteristics of community assets that make them susceptible to damage from a hazard event.

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There are four steps to conducting a risk assessment.

1
Identify
Relevant Hazards

2
Describe
Hazards

3
Identify
Community Assets
and Analyze Risk

4
Summarize
Vulnerability

1

1. Identify Relevant Hazards

The first step of a risk assessment is to identify the potential hazards for an area. In any community, there are always numerous human-caused and natural hazards to consider. These hazards can include:

- **Water Supply Failure**
- **Nuclear Power Incident**
- **Drought**
- **Gas Explosions**
- **Hurricanes**

Every community has considerable knowledge about the types of hazards that have impacted their home in the past and/or that they might be vulnerable to in the future. In addition to relying on local knowledge, NAACP units can partner with the following institutions to identify an area's relevant hazards:

- **Local or regional National Weather Service offices**
- **Local and state hazard mitigation offices**
- **Local state/fire, community-based safety units, emergency medical services and health departments**
- **Colleges/universities and other research institutions**

Both government agencies and independent organizations play a key role in hazard assessment as well by predicting weather patterns, assessing potential risks, and monitoring environmental hazards at local, state, and regional levels. Some examples of relevant resources include:

Weather Underground

Weather Underground connects communities to comprehensive and accessible weather data on issues including air quality and extreme weather.

wunderground.com

FloodzoneData.us

FloodzoneData.us presents data describing the housing and population location in 100- and 500-year U.S. floodplains. This resource includes an interactive map and downloadable data tables at the national, state, county, and Census tract levels.

floodzonedata.us

Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS)

This community-based non-profit measures and maps precipitation in partnership with volunteers from across all fifty states.

cocorahs.org/Content.aspx

Climate Central

Climate Central reports climate trends and impacts, from state level temperature trends, to wildfires, heat waves, drought, precipitation, and more. The Climate Central website also provides information about changes in extreme weather events, state by state risk analyses, and sea level rise projections for specific communities and locations.

climatecentral.org

Surging Seas: Risk Zone Map

One of Climate Central's tools that is particularly useful for coastal communities is the *Surging Seas: Risk Zone* map. This map tool shows areas vulnerable to near-term flooding from different combinations of sea level rise, storm surge, tides, tsunamis, or permanent submersion by long-term sea level rise.

sealevel.climatecentral.org

2. Describe Hazards

Once you and your community have identified hazards, it's important to accurately describe the impact of each hazard on an area. A risk assessment should include the following descriptions:

TABLE 2: HAZARD DESCRIPTIONS	
Location	The geographic areas that are affected by the hazard areas. Maps can be a good way to illustrate locations for many hazards.
Extent	Extent is the strength, or magnitude, of the hazard.
Previous Occurrences	The history of previous hazard events for each hazard. For hazards with a significant history of past occurrences, it may be helpful to compile past events in their own table.
Probability of Future Events	Forecasting, data, and modeling tools from state and local agencies can help communities determine the likelihood of a hazard occurring in the future. However, with a changing climate, historical data may not be sufficient.

3. Identify Community Assets and Analyze Risk

The next step of the risk assessment is to identify community assets that are threatened by hazards. Once you have identified these assets, you can analyze the risk to these assets by outlining vulnerabilities, describing potential impacts, and estimating losses for each hazard. Methods for analyzing risk include:

- **Exposure analysis:** identifying the existing and future assets located in hazard areas.
- **Historical analysis:** using information on impacts and losses from previous hazard events to predict potential impacts and losses during a similar event in the future.
- **Scenario analysis:** predicting the impacts of a hypothetical event. This method is especially useful for hazards that are low in frequency and high in consequence.

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TABLE 3: Asset Inventory & Impact	
ASSET	IMPACT
PEOPLE are the most important community asset. The risk assessment can identify areas of greater population density as well as populations that may have unique vulnerabilities or a limited ability to respond or recover during a disaster.	Describe potential impacts to people, including groups that are particularly vulnerable to the given hazard scenario.
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT includes natural resources that reduce hazard impacts, foster resiliency, and function as critical habitat for people, plants, and animals.	Describe potential impacts to the natural environment, noting specific areas or natural features that are particularly vulnerable to the given hazard scenario.
BUILT ENVIRONMENT includes existing structures, systems—such as water, power, and communications—that are critical for community safety, facilities that help communities respond to and recover from emergencies, and cultural resources that are unique or irreplaceable.	Describe the potential impacts to the built environment, noting key infrastructure or buildings that would be impacted.
ECONOMY comprises drivers—such as major employers and primary economic sectors—that can help a community recover after a disaster.	Describe the potential impacts to the economy, and include a description of how the community would be impacted as a result.

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4. Summarize Vulnerability

The final step of the risk assessment is to summarize the information gathered in the previous steps so that the community can understand the most significant threats. In addition to a summary of impacts, each statement should specifically note the impacts on vulnerable populations.

Develop a Risk Mitigation Plan

Risk assessments can be used to inform risk mitigation plans. Risk mitigation plans detail the actions needed to reduce or eliminate risks caused by relevant hazards. To be equitable, risk mitigation plans must address the disproportionate share of risks shouldered by low-income, communities of color, and other marginalized groups.

Risk mitigation plans recognize how issues such as extractive industry and climate change intersect to impact communities. In the Gulf Coast, for example, fossil fuel-powered overdevelopment has contributed to a significant decline in wetlands and an increase in sea level rise. As the 2023 Fifth National Climate Assessment illuminates, these risks are a particular threat to Black coastal communities. Across the country, suburban sprawl has pushed more and more homes in wildfire-vulnerable states such as California and Colorado into the line of fire. Although these examples reflect different hazards, the goal of the mitigation plan is the same: to contain sprawl, reduce development, and restore the health of habitats—such as wetlands and woodlands—whose existence is integral to our own.

A risk mitigation plan should comprise mitigation goals, mitigation actions, and mitigation action plans. Putting this plan together is an important part of the emergency prevention and mitigation process. Without it, community groups might struggle to have a clear sense of what steps they must take in order to achieve their disaster resilience aims.

Mitigation Goals

Mitigation goals are the general guidelines that reflect what outcomes the community wants to achieve by implementing the risk mitigation plan. Mitigation goals should be consistent with the hazards identified in the risk assessment.

Mitigation Actions

Mitigation actions are the specific actions, projects, or activities that will be taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their impacts. Implementing mitigation actions helps achieve mitigation goals.

Mitigation Action Plans

Mitigation action plans example how to implement actions. Effective plans incorporate the mitigation actions into existing community objectives and should include the following details:

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- **Mitigation action**
  – What are the mitigation actions?

- **Responsible agency**
  – Which department, agency, or group is best positioned to guide each action?

- **Potential resources**
  – Where and how you will find the funding, technical assistance, and material support necessary to implement these plans?

- **Timeframe**
  – How long will it take to implement each action?

Use the following table to draft a plan specific to your community. Mitigation goals and actions can be adapted as needed.

TABLE 5: Types of Mitigation Actions

MITIGATION GOAL	MITIGATION ACTION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	MITIGATION PLAN
Develop policies that protect people during emergency situations	Local plans and regulations	These actions include working with government authorities to develop policies and/or codes that shape how land is developed and buildings are constructed.	• Equitable land ordinances	
Design infrastructure projects that can withstand increased hazards	Structure and infrastructure projects	These actions include modifying existing structure and infrastructure projects to either protect them from a hazard or remove them from a hazard area.	• Xeriscaping • Fortified roofing	
Fortify natural systems in order to increase community resilience	Natural systems protection	These actions include reducing development in edge habitats (such as wetlands) that protect against forces like sea level rise, as well as restoring the functions of natural systems in order to minimize the damage from disasters.	• Marshland restoration • Prescribed burns	
Inform community on potential disasters and inspire action	Education and awareness programs	These actions include educating the community about potential hazards.	• Community trainings (see Module 2)	

The processes for developing a Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan have been adapted from the FEMA Local Mitigation Handbook. Some state emergency management offices also have risk assessment and risk mitigation plans you can reference. Check out the Resources section for further guidance.

Module 1
Resources

"How to Conduct a Community Risk Assessment"
enterprisecommunity.org/learning-center/resources/how-conduct-community-risk-assessment

Mitigation Matters Reports
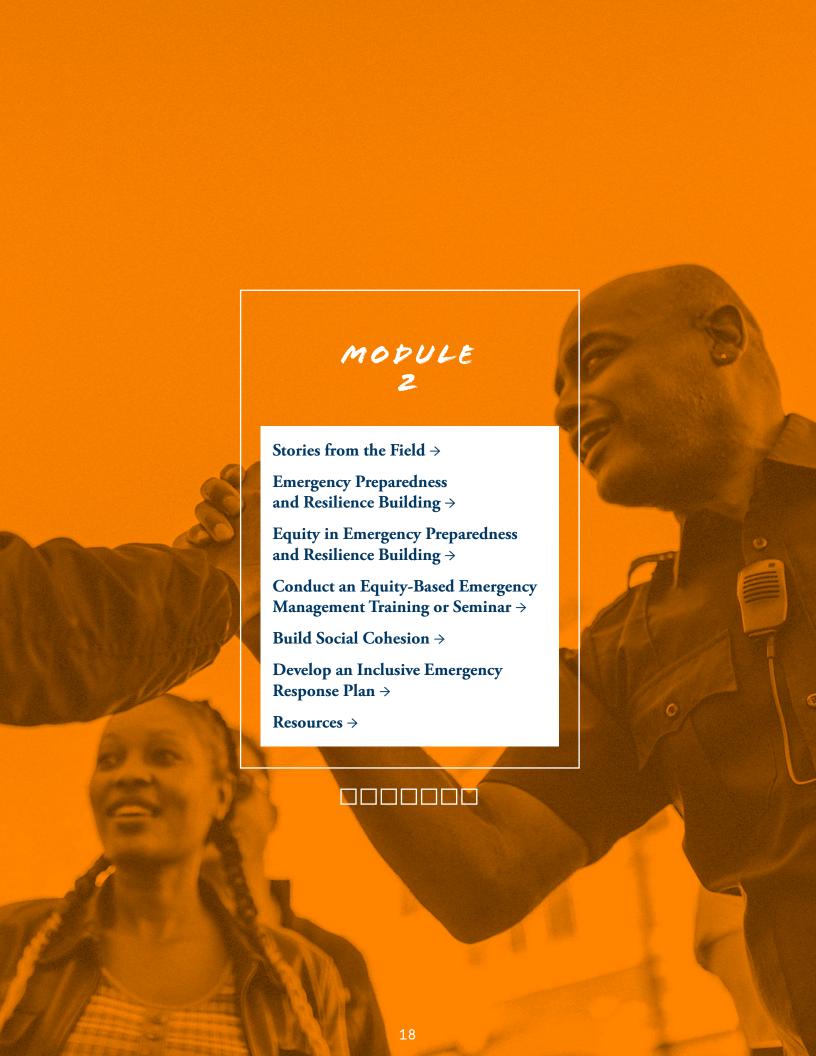**hazards.colorado.edu/research/mitigation-matters/archives**

National Disaster Risk Assessment by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
preventionweb.net/publication/words-action-guidelines-national-disaster-risk-assessment

Emergency Legal Responders Resources
emergencylegalresponders.org/resources

Disaster 101
grist.org/extreme-weather/disaster-preparation-recovery-resources

MODULE 2

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Stories from the Field

"We need to adopt a preparedness mindset."

In 2024, Hurricane Helene tore through North Carolina, devastating mountain communities who were uniquely unprepared for a hurricane to move so far inland. In the aftermath, disparities in distribution of federal resources exacerbated pre-existing disparities in infrastructure; many white communities along the coast, for example, received support from the EPA and Army Corps through beach erosion projects. That said, money alone isn't the determining factor in equitable recovery: it's also important to have knowledgeable and connected people from the community in charge of their community's recovery. This is why it is critical that NAACP leaders develop a preparedness mindset by connecting with community groups *before* a crisis in order to educate organizations, strengthen webs of support across the emergency management continuum, and develop preparedness skills (such as stocking up on canned goods, water, and extra canisters of gas prior to an emergency). Additionally, disaster resilience requires clear decision making strategies, open communication with stakeholders, and inclusion of diverse voices, such as differently abled people.

Deborah Maxwell
President of the NAACP
North Carolina State Conference

Da'Quan Love
NAACP North Carolina State
Executive Director

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Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Building

Like the prevention and mitigation phase, the emergency preparedness and resilience building phase takes place before an emergency occurs.
The purpose of this phase is to prepare the community to handle an emergency by coming together to establish strategies and develop a plan for disaster response.

Preparedness and resilience building activities include:

✓ **Training**

✓ **Planning**

✓ **Practicing**

✓ **Procuring resources such as food, water, and medication**

Equity in Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Building

Equity in emergency preparedness and resilience building means establishing diverse plans that reflect the needs of all people, accommodate the pre-existing vulnerabilities of various groups, and build on community assets. To promote equity in disaster preparedness and response, NAACP units should consider the following actions:

✓ **Community Engagement:**
   Collaborate with local organizations to ensure that disaster planning includes input from marginalized populations.

✓ **Advocacy:**
   Push for policies that address systemic inequalities, such as equitable distribution of resources and inclusive emergency planning. Partner with local institutions to conduct comprehensive risk assessments that prioritize people over property. Advocate for disaster plans that explicitly include undocumented residents, transgender individuals, people with disabilities, and those without traditional identification or insurance.

✓ **Education and Training:**
   Provide resources and training to community members on disaster preparedness tailored to their specific needs.

✓ **Monitoring and Accountability:**
   Hold government agencies accountable for equitable disaster response and recovery efforts.

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KEY ACTION STEPS

In this module we outline the key steps that NAACP units and other community-based organizations can take to advance equity in emergency preparedness and resilience building.

✓ Conduct an equity-based emergency management training or seminar

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✓ Build social cohesion

✓ Develop an inclusive emergency response plan

Conduct an Equity-Based Emergency Management Training or Seminar

One of the first steps an NAACP unit can take to organize towards equity in emergency management is to conduct an equity-based emergency management training or seminar. The training should be specifically designed for the community it takes place in. See Table 1 for suggestions on potential subjects, facilitators, and content. "ECJ" in this table refers to the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice volunteer leaders across the country.

TABLE 1: Emergency Management Training		
SUBJECT AREA	**FACILITATORS**	**TRAINING CONTENT**
Emergency Management 101	• Staff from state/local emergency management agency • State Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services • State Emergency Management Agencies • ECJ Committee Member	• Introduce the four phases of the emergency management continuum • Overview the different kinds of natural and human-caused hazards that can cause disasters • Explain how these risks differently impact Black communities and other frontline communities
Individual and Family Preparedness	• Staff from state/local emergency management agency • State Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services • State Emergency Management Agencies • ECJ Committee Member	• Overview what to do when an emergency occurs and discuss how to prepare • Explain how to make or obtain a disaster kit • Discuss how to develop a household emergency plan for both evacuation and shelter-in-place orders • Introduce community evacuation plans
Justice and Equity in Emergency Management	• NAACP State or Unit President • ECJ Committee Chair or ECJ Member	• Discuss differential impacts for Black and other frontline communities in emergency scenarios • Identify vulnerabilities in the community, including who is able to respond, and who has the ability to recover • Discuss how to account for vulnerabilities and differential impacts across the emergency management continuum
The Role of NAACP in Emergency Management	• NAACP State or Unit President • ECJ Committee Chair or ECJ Member	• Identify the NAACP's role in emergency management on the national, state, and local scale • Identify what organizations the NAACP can partner with on emergency management • Discuss the branch's role in upholding civil and human rights in emergency situations

Consult the resources section for tools that are helpful for conducting an equity-based emergency management training or seminar.

The Center for Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) works with state leaders in all seven NAACP regions. The NAACP's Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) staff are available to help plan and execute emergency management trainings.Units can reach out to ECJ staff for help with emergency management technical assistance.

Build Social Cohesion

A key aspect of community resilience is social cohesion.[4] For a community to work well together before, during, and after disaster, there must be strong relationships, trust, cooperation, and mutuality.[5] Preparing for an emergency doesn't only mean investing in resilient infrastructure; it also means investing in resilient *relationships*.

There are many different programs for communities to learn how to work together to effectively respond in an emergency.

These programs include:

ATTUNE

This yearlong hybrid program from the Weaving Earth Center for Relational Education helps participants build the disaster preparedness skills needed to show up effectively in a climate emergency. Participants in ATTUNE can also take concurrent certification courses in Wilderness First Response, Embodied Ecology, and Firefighter Type II during the program. **weavingearth.org/attune**

Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management (I-DIEM)

I-DIEM facilitates several programs to support communities through the emergency management continuum, including BUILD, a proprietary program dedicated to improving the resilience of underserved and indigenous populations in Gulf Coast states, and Community Crafted Resilience Solutions. **i-diem.org**

Emergency Legal Responders (ELR)

As a disaster rights organization, ELR facilitates a number of community-based disaster workshops throughout the country. Areas of focus include disaster law, housing rights, and surveillance, safety, and solidarity during a disaster. **emergencylegalresponders.org/programs**

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

As a program of FEMA, CERT enhances volunteer community leaders' capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The multipart training is facilitated by emergency first responders and focuses on strengthening skills in areas such as light search and rescue operations, and disaster simulation. After completing their training, CERT members can assist others during disasters when professional responders might not be immediately available to help.

fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-activities-webinars/community-emergency-response-team

**BECOME A MEMBER OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVE IN DISASTER**

NAACP units can also advance equity in emergency management by joining Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). VOAD, which exists on the national, state, and local level, is an association of organizations whose mission is to mitigate and alleviate the impact of disasters, provide a forum for promoting cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration, and foster more effective delivery of services to communities affected by disaster. Contact info@nvoad.org for more information.

Develop an Inclusive Emergency Response Plan

By building relationships with the government agencies that lead emergency planning processes, NAACP units can advise these entities on methods for including NAACP members in the planning process that reflect the specific needs of their communities. The process of creating community-shaped strategies not only improves the resulting plans but also strengthens skills—such as trust and communication—that can be leveraged during emergency response and recovery phases to support the community.
the

Roles for the NAACP in the Emergency Response Planning Process

As President Nweze reminds us in their "Stories from the Field" in Module 1, the NAACP must prioritize emergency preparedness at state and local meetings, because "if we don't prioritize this issue, who can we expect to do it?" In addition to prioritizing emergency preparedness, it is also important to underscore the connection between climate justice and the work of the NAACP during these meetings.

NAACP units can be involved in the emergency response planning process by:

✓ Helping to identify the pre-existing vulnerabilities, needs, and assets that exist within the community.

✓ Helping to identify and include vulnerable populations within a specific geographic area in the planning process.

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✓ Identifying communication channels that will be effective in reaching the NAACP constituency and conducting evaluations to test the appropriateness of messages.

✓ Developing, testing, and evaluating inclusive exercises that reflect the unique characteristics of diverse communities.

✓ Training NAACP members and other community members in emergency preparedness.

✓ Ensuring that emergency staff is representative of the demographics of the community.

Considering the Community's Pre-Existing Vulnerabilities and Assets

Of the roles listed above, one of the most critical ways that NAACP units can contribute to the response planning process is to provide guidance on equity measures by considering the specific pre-existing vulnerabilities and assets in the community.

Pre-Existing Vulnerabilities in Disasters

Disasters expose and intensify the structural inequalities that already exist in society. For communities of color, as well as low-income, disabled, LGBTQ+, immigrant, and elderly populations, disasters can deepen cycles of harm rooted in systemic racism, economic exclusion, and political neglect. There are many reasons these vulnerabilities matter for the emergency preparedness process, including:

1. **Disproportionate Exposure and Risk**
   Due to historical and ongoing discriminatory policies like redlining and zoning laws, communities of color are more likely to reside in environmentally hazardous areas, such as floodplains, industrial zones, or regions with inadequate infrastructure. This placement increases their exposure to disasters and environmental toxins, leading to compounded health risks and property damage.

2. **Limited Access to Resources**
   Marginalized populations often lack access to essential resources that facilitate disaster preparedness and recovery, such as healthcare, insurance, and financial support. Many low-income individuals, for example, may not be able to afford evacuation costs or temporary housing, which can in turn prolong displacement and recovery.

3. **Systemic Barriers in Emergency Response**
   Emergency management systems frequently overlook the specific needs of marginalized groups. Language barriers, lack of disability accommodations, and discriminatory shelter policies can exclude these populations from receiving timely and adequate assistance.

4. **Post-Disaster Displacement and Gentrification**
   In the aftermath of disasters, redevelopment efforts can lead to the displacement of long-standing communities. Without intentional policies to protect residents, rebuilding can result in gentrification, pushing out those who have historically inhabited these areas.

> **Refer to Table A in the Appendix for some specific vulnerabilities to consider when developing disaster plans. It's important to note that some of these same vulnerabilities are also assets: intergenerational communities, for example, might face more struggles during an evacuation, but are also well-positioned to advocate for inclusive policies.**

Expanded Framework of Vulnerabilities

To effectively address and mitigate these vulnerabilities, it's crucial to understand the forces that exacerbate the above examples.

These include:

- Socioeconomic Factors

   Income and Employment: Low-income individuals often lack the financial means to prepare for or recover from disasters, making them more susceptible to prolonged hardship.[6]

   Education: Limited educational opportunities can impede access to information about disaster preparedness.[7]

- Health and Disability

   Chronic Health Conditions: Pre-existing health issues can be exacerbated during disasters due to disrupted medical services.[8]

   Disability: Individuals with disabilities may face challenges during evacuation and in accessing shelters not equipped to meet their needs.[9]

- Housing and Infrastructure

   Substandard Housing: Poorly constructed homes are more vulnerable to damage, and residents may lack insurance to cover losses.[10]

   Infrastructure Neglect: Marginalized communities often suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including roads and utilities, hindering evacuation and recovery efforts.[11]

- Social and Political Marginalization

   Distrust in Institutions: Historical injustices contribute to a lack of trust in government agencies, affecting the willingness to seek assistance.

   Underrepresentation: Lack of representation in decision-making processes can lead to policies that fail to address the specific needs of these communities.

Module 2
Resources

American Red Cross: How to Prepare for Emergencies
redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies

Community Emergency Response Team
ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team

Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management
i-diem.org

Nature Based Solutions for Hazard Mitigation in Kentucky
kymitigation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Nature-Based-Solutions-for-Hazard-Mitigation-in-Kentucky-Final-April-2022.pdf

Healthy Housing Resource Library
nchh.org/resources

Disaster Tips (The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies)
disasterstrategies.org/disaster-tips

Guidance for Integrating Culturally Diverse Communities into Planning for and Responding to Emergencies: A Toolkit by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/resource/1002/guidance-for-integrating-culturally-diverse-communities-into-planning-for-and-responding-to-emncies-a-toolkit

Emergency Preparedness and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) People: What Health Centers Need to Know by The National LGBT Health Education Center
lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Preparedness-for-LGBT-People-Final.pdf

Community Based Vulnerability Assessment
mdcinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Community-Based-Vulnerability-Assessment.pdf

Resilient Cities Network
resilientcitiesnetwork.org/resilience-resource-center

Climate Gentrification Tools
antidisplacement.org/toolkit/strategies/climate-gentrification-tools

MODULE 3

Stories from the Field

/ "Disaster resilience is a critical element of ensuring healthy housing in communities."

In communities like Westernport, MD, disaster resilience is a critical element of ensuring healthy housing. The catastrophic May 2025 floods in Westernport exacerbated asthma and mold-related illnesses, and caused the death of one young man. The increasing frequency of climate-related disasters such as flooding and wildfires, has critically impacted the health and resiliency of housing. In this case, FEMA has refused to address the critical infrastructure issues that afflict family homes in this community. Water intrusion can lead to not only the exacerbation of mold, mildew and moisture, but also to the deterioration of foundations in the home and the destabilization of lead-based paint. Because of that, our organization Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) has been thinking much more about preventative measures we can take—such as fortifying the home's foundation, improving ventilation and guarding homes against the influx of toxins from polluted outdoor air—as part of our healthy housing measures.

Ruth Ann Norton
President & CEO of Green and Healthy Homes Initiative

Emergency Response and Relief

During the emergency response and relief phase, local and state governments put their preparedness plans into action in order to respond to an immediate or imminent threat. Response and relief actions include:

✓ Evacuating people in harm's way

✓ Providing essential emergency services such as shelter, search and rescue, and medical care

✓ Conducting preliminary damage assessments (PDAs)

✓ Deploying response teams

KEY ACTION STEPS

In this module we outline the key steps that NAACP units and other community-based organizations can take to advance equity in emergency response and relief.

✓ Assess existing disaster assistance services

✓ Conduct a preliminary damage assessment

✓ Monitor effectiveness of local, state, and federal responses

✓ Submit a civil rights, consumer, or environmental complaint (if applicable)

Assess Disaster Assistance Services

When a disaster hits a community, the first step is for an NAACP branch to evaluate the emergency response efforts already underway. This way, the NAACP is able to add to (rather than duplicate) current actions. If the NAACP branch is a member of the area VOAD (as outlined in Module 2) or has built relationships with local emergency management agencies, then the branch can expect to receive up-to-date information on emergency response efforts.

✓ **Local Disaster Assistance**

During an emergency, local elected officials such as mayors, city councils, and boards of commissioners are largely responsible for emergency management. In the early stages of an emergency, the local government alerts residents to current threats and instructs them to take whatever actions are needed—such as evacuation—to minimize damage and protect life and property.

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After a disaster takes place, fire and police units, emergency medical personnel, and rescue workers are often the first to provide aid to disaster victims. During the short-term recovery phase, the local government may work with grassroots organizers to ensure public order as well as to deliver vital services such as water, power, communications, transportation, shelter, and medical care.

If the scale and impact of the disaster event is such that the local government is unable to meet the needs of its residents, the local government may seek additional resources from beyond its own boundaries. **Mutual aid agreements** are agreements that facilitate the sharing of emergency aid across jurisdictions (for example across city, county, or state lines).

> **To find the local emergency management office, search the local government website or visit the local city hall.**

✓ **State Disaster Assistance**

Although the specific structure of organizations varies from state-to-state, all states have their own state emergency management organizations that carry out the specific provisions of the law. The role of all state emergency management organizations is to prepare for emergencies and to coordinate the activation of resources controlled by the state government to respond to and recover from emergencies.

Because local governments usually have limited resources, state emergency management agencies are involved in virtually all serious emergencies or disasters. Based on the information received from the local government, the state emergency management organization will coordinate deployment of state personnel and resources to impacted areas.

✓ **Federal Disaster Assistance**

When a disaster occurs that exceeds the capacity of local, state, and tribal resources—and/or impacts federal property, other areas of federal jurisdiction, or what is considered a national security interest—the federal government may support state and local recovery efforts. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the federal agency that coordinates the activation and implementation of federal response and recovery, although other federal agencies are involved in response and recovery too.

- **Stafford Act Federal Disaster Assistance**

  The Stafford Act is a United States federal law that allows the federal government to provide emergency assistance to state and local governments, certain private nonprofit organizations, and individuals in order to support response, recovery, and mitigation efforts following a major disaster. A request for a Stafford Act declaration must be submitted by the governor or tribal chief within 30 or 60 days respectively

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of the incident in order to be considered. However, there is no deadline by when the president must respond to the request, and the president does not have to agree with FEMA's recommendation. The President has sole discretion to grant or deny a declaration request.

- **Advocating for a Disaster Declaration**

  Advocating for a disaster declaration through the Stafford Act is one way that communities can secure assistance during and after emergencies. The Act states, in part, that: "All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected State" (a state also includes the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Federally recognized Indian tribal governments also have the option of pursuing a declaration directly from the President.

- **Non-Stafford Act Federal Assistance**

  Even without a presidential disaster declaration, certain types of assistance may be available through various federal agencies, including FEMA. Some of the most common forms of response activities available without a presidential declaration include search and rescue, flood protection, and health and welfare checks.

  In these instances, federal departments and agencies provide assistance directly to states, tribes and local jurisdictions, consistent with their own authorities. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) for example, local and tribal governments can request assistance directly from the Environmental Protection Agency and/or the U.S. Coast Guard. The Small Business Administration (SBA) can also issue an "administrative declaration" even if the President doesn't declare a major disaster or emergency, authorizing disaster loan assistance for people in the affected area.

> **The steps for applying for federal disaster assistance are in continual flux. Because of this, we encourage you to visit emergencylegalresponders.org for up-to-date information on disaster assistance programs.**

TABLE 2: Non-governmental Organizations		
ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster	VOAD is an association of organizations that mitigate and alleviate the impact of disasters, provides a forum promoting communication and coordination, and fosters more effective delivery of services to communities affected by disaster.	**nvoad.org**
BEAM (Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective)	BEAM is a national training, movement building, and grant making institution that is dedicated to the healing, wellness, and liberation of Black and marginalized communities.	**beam.community/about**
American Red Cross	The mission of the American Red Cross is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.	**redcross.org**

TABLE 2: *Continued...*

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
All Hands and Hearts Smart Response	All Hands and Hearts – Smart Response efficiently and effectively addresses the immediate and long-term needs of communities impacted by natural disasters by listening to, and working with, local peoples.	**allhandsandhearts.org**
Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (The Partnership)	The Partnership is a disability-led national organization that promotes equity for people with disabilities before, during, and after disasters by providing rapid response coordination, technical assistance, and policy advocacy rooted in disability justice.	**disasterstrategies.org**
National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)	NLIHC works to ensure the lowest-income people in the U.S. have safe, affordable housing. Their Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition coordinates with local partners to ensure equitable housing recovery after disasters.	**nlihc.org/disaster-housing-recovery-research-resilience**
SBP (formerly St. Bernard Project)	SBP is a national disaster resilience and recovery nonprofit focused on shrinking the time between disaster and recovery, especially for low-income and BIPOC survivors. Provides direct services, rebuilding, policy advocacy, and resilience training.	**sbpusa.org**
Direct Relief	A humanitarian aid organization active in all 50 states, Direct Relief delivers emergency medical resources in disasters in partnership with safety-net clinics and health centers in under-resourced communities.	**directrelief.org**
Enterprise Community Partners – Resilience and Disaster Recovery	Enterprise works at the intersection of housing and community development. Their resilience programs focus on affordable housing, climate justice, and equitable recovery after disasters.	**enterprisecommunity.org/impact-areas/resilience**
Protection & Advocacy (P&A) Systems and Client Assistance Programs (CAP)	Under federal law, each state and territory must designate a P&A/CAP agency to provide legal services to people with disabilities. In high-risk areas, P&As often have attorneys who specialize in disasters.	**ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies**
Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management (I-DIEM)	I-DIEM is a multidisciplinary non-profit that helps organizations develop equitable emergency management systems through awareness and education, open dialogue, capacity building, and institutional change.	**i-diem.org**
Mutual Aid Disaster Relief	Mutual Aid Disaster Relief is a grassroots disaster relief network based on the principles of solidarity, mutual aid, and autonomous direct action.	**mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/about**

To find more organizations active in disaster assistance go to: nvoad.org/voad-members/national-members.

Conduct a Preliminary Damage Assessment

For disasters with a far-reaching impact, conducting an in-depth preliminary damage assessment can help NAACP units determine an appropriate response. These assessments, typically conducted by local or county teams in partnership with non-emergency management personnel, can be used to shape effective response and relief projects. If you are working with your local ECJ chair on emergency management, you can conduct an assessment together to document the damage you're seeing in your community. This information can then be shared with both your state chapter and the national ECJ team for additional assistance.

It is important that damage assessment teams are representative of the community, and include a diverse cross-section of individuals. See Table C in the Appendix for general guidance on the process.

Monitor Response Effectiveness

A monitoring tool is a simple way to oversee and evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response. Through guiding questions, the tool helps people participating in emergency response to observe and document differential needs of certain communities as well as identify potential disparities in infrastructure and service provision.

As part of documenting response effectiveness, conduct interviews with members of the impacted community. If possible, record video interviews: not only will photos, video recordings, and written accounts serve as evidence of the conditions in the impacted area, but they also function as effective advocacy tools. Verifiable stories are the most compelling tools in telling the stories of community members' lived experiences. See Table D in the Appendix for a response monitoring tool chart you can keep for your records and use to inform future conversations.

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Submit Civil Rights, Consumer, and Environmental Complaints

One of the goals of assessing the efficacy of emergency response and relief efforts is to identify points of intervention. Although many communities practice altruistic care during disasters, bad actors can and do arise. Predatory practices, such as fraudulent charges and scams, are a threat to many disaster-impacted communities. This is why learning how to submit civil rights, consumer, and environmental complaints is one way to reinforce accountability during emergencies.

Filing a complaint at the local and state level (if possible) is an important practice. Although federal guidance is changing, filing a complaint at the federal level is also a way to practice accountability.

✓ **Filing a Civil Rights Complaint with State Level Options**

Start by identifying which agency in your state handles civil rights complaints involving government services, public accommodations, or discrimination in aid distribution. Common offices include:

- **State Attorney General (AG) Offices** can investigate and prosecute violations of state and federal civil rights laws as well as violations of the U.S. and state constitutions.

- **State Departments of Justice (DOJ)** often have divisions focused on civil rights or consumer protections that investigate discrimination in state-funded programs.

- **State Commissions of Human or Civil Rights** handle complaints involving discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

- **State Environmental Protection Agencies** address discrimination in environmental permitting, disaster response, or resource allocation by enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other nondiscrimination laws.

Because structures vary across states, here are examples of how some agencies handle these complaints:

- The **Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD)** can investigate and prosecute violations of state and federal civil rights laws as well as violations of the U.S. and state constitutions. They also have a 24-hour emergency response line and an online complaint tracking system.

- The **North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ)** has a Title VI Coordinator to receive complaints, with a form available online.

- The **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)** asks persons to direct all complaints by either mail, email, or fax to their non-discrimination coordinator who receives their civil rights complaints.

To file a complaint at the state level:

1. **Identify the correct state agency**

2. **Confirm intake method** – Some agencies take online forms; others require email, mail, or fax. Many allow third-party or organizational submissions.

3. **Gather key information before you file. Complaints should include the following information:**
   - Description of what happened
   - The agency, contractor or entity involved
   - Basis of discrimination (race, color, national origin, disability etc.)
   - Supporting evidence
   - Name, address, and telephone number
   - Signature

4. **Confirm deadlines and submit complaint**

✓ Filing a Price Gouging Complaint with the State Attorney General

Price gouging is a term that refers to the practice of raising the price of goods, commodities, and/or services (such as housing) to an unreasonable or unfair level. This increase in price is often the result of a sudden shortage of goods, such as in the event of a natural disaster or other crisis. For example, after Hurricane Harvey inundated the Texas Gulf coast, some businesses began selling cases of water for $99.

> While many states have laws that protect consumers from price gouging, there are no federal laws prohibiting price gouging. For a state-by-state guide to price gouging laws go to: findlaw.com/consumer/consumer-transactions/price-gouging-laws-by-state.html

✓ Filing a Consumer Complaint with the Better Business Bureau

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is an organization focused on "advancing marketplace trust." While the BBB is not affiliated with any governmental agency, the organization accepts consumer complaints/disputes that relate to marketplace issues experienced with the services or products a business provides. Those who experience price gouging or other kinds of consumer scams in the wake of a disaster may file a complaint with the BBB. Typically, the issue complained of must have arisen within the previous 12 months although warranties/guarantees or other extenuating circumstances may supersede this criteria.

> **CONTRACTOR SCAMS** Although many people are motivated by care during a crisis, there are also people who seek to take advantage of those impacted by natural disasters. Emergency Legal Responders is a trusted resource for comprehensive information on how to protect yourself from scams. Learn more at emergencylegalresponders.org

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✓ **Reporting an Environmental Violation to the Environmental Protection Agency**

One of the roles of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to enforce environmental laws to protect human health and the environment. This is particularly important during disasters.

An **environmental violation** occurs when an activity or an existing condition does not comply with an environmental law or regulation. An **environmental emergency** is a sudden threat to the public health or wellbeing of the environment. Examples of environmental emergencies include:

- Oil and/or chemical spills
- Radiation emergencies
- Biological discharges

✓ **Reporting Environmental Violations**

If you are seeing an environmental emergency that poses an immediate threat to human health and/or the environment, call 911. To report environmental violations, follow these steps:

1. **Visit echo.epa.gov/report-environmental-violations**

2. **Respond to the questions requested on this page.** Note that in addition to a violation description, the reporter is also able to submit photos or other media files.

3. **While it is not required, it is recommended that the reporter include their contact information so that the EPA is able to contact the reporter for additional information.**

4. **Once complete, select "Send Report" at the bottom of the page.**

Although the EPA is a resource for reporting environmental violations, federal agencies aren't our only recourse. If your community is suffering from environmental violations and emergencies during and/or after a disaster, there are many state-led and mutual aid organizations you can contact for support, such as your local environmental management branch.

Module 3
Resources

Resources for LGBT People Affected by Disaster
lambdalegal.org

Lessons Learned from Working with FEMA
https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files
DisasterLegalAid2018RoundtableSeries25ProTipsforWorkingwithFEMA.pdf

Resources (Natural Hazards Center)
hazards.colorado.edu/resources/wildfires

Disaster Recovery Center Locator
egateway.fema.gov/ESF6/DRCLocator

Federal Disaster Assistance Portal
disasterassistance.gov

MODULE 4

Stories from the Field

/ "Disasters don't discriminate,
recovery measures do."

During the 2025 Palisades and Eaton Fires in Los Angeles, both the alert systems and response efforts were compromised in communities of color. In higher-income neighborhoods such as the Palisades, firefighters were on the scene before the fire broke out. But in mixed-income and diverse West Altadena, the majority of residents did not get evacuation notices, and a single County firefighter truck was enlisted to assist greater West Altadena. Because of this, many of the people who died in the fires were from West Altadena. Additionally, several national organizations on-the-ground during the disaster did not have connections to community members, meaning that it was difficult to disseminate information and distribute aid before, during, and after the disaster. These experiences underscore the need for community alert systems as well as for philanthropic investments that reflect the communities they serve. They also show how important it is for communities to be in charge of telling their own stories.

Brandon Lamar
President of the Pasadena Branch
of the NAACP

Jasmin Lopez
Passion Project,
Executive Assistant

Equity in Emergency Management Policy

Public policies that govern emergency management processes have been inadequate at protecting the rights of our communities during times of disaster. Despite calls from disaster practitioners, policy makers continue to favor funding recovery efforts rather than passing policies that resource mitigation, prevention, and preparedness efforts. Community alert systems, for example, are a preparedness and response measure that are shaped by government policies, the National Weather System, and agencies such as NOAA. Investing in reliable, effective, accessible, and multilingual alert systems means investing in agencies that support weather predictions.

Even when investments in mitigating impacts of disasters have been made, however, many of these efforts prioritize protecting profits over people. All too often, "cost-benefit" analyses for disaster mitigation and prevention are formulated in dollars and cents rather than human lives. Not only does this practice result in more destruction than necessary, it is inefficient and costly.

In order to build equity in emergency management, policy solutions must not only be technical solutions for emergency scenarios, or financially-based solutions that prioritize property values, but also measures to support community resilience more broadly. In this module, we discuss some of the strategies and tactics that advocates can use to pass equitable emergency management policy. We also offer policy recommendations for each phase of the emergency management continuum.

KEY ACTION STEPS

In this module we outline the key steps that NAACP units and other community-based organizations can take to advance equity in emergency management.

✓ Identify equitable emergency management policies

✓ Develop policy solutions

✓ Influence policymakers

✓ Design a story-based strategy

✓ Work with the media to expose injustice

Identify Equitable Emergency Management Policies

On the following pages, you will find four tables that example policy considerations and recommendations across the emergency management continuum. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.
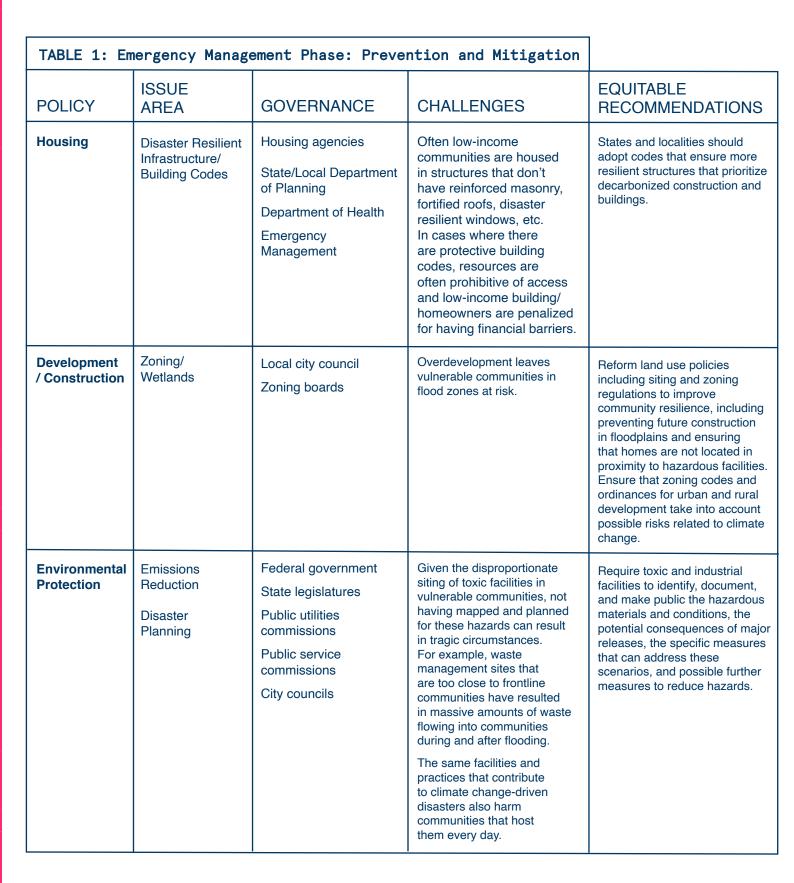
TABLE 1: Emergency Management Phase: Prevention and Mitigation				
POLICY	**ISSUE AREA**	**GOVERNANCE**	**CHALLENGES**	**EQUITABLE RECOMMENDATIONS**
Housing	Disaster Resilient Infrastructure/ Building Codes	Housing agencies State/Local Department of Planning Department of Health Emergency Management	Often low-income communities are housed in structures that don't have reinforced masonry, fortified roofs, disaster resilient windows, etc. In cases where there are protective building codes, resources are often prohibitive of access and low-income building/ homeowners are penalized for having financial barriers.	States and localities should adopt codes that ensure more resilient structures that prioritize decarbonized construction and buildings.
Development / Construction	Zoning/ Wetlands	Local city council Zoning boards	Overdevelopment leaves vulnerable communities in flood zones at risk.	Reform land use policies including siting and zoning regulations to improve community resilience, including preventing future construction in floodplains and ensuring that homes are not located in proximity to hazardous facilities. Ensure that zoning codes and ordinances for urban and rural development take into account possible risks related to climate change.
Environmental Protection	Emissions Reduction Disaster Planning	Federal government State legislatures Public utilities commissions Public service commissions City councils	Given the disproportionate siting of toxic facilities in vulnerable communities, not having mapped and planned for these hazards can result in tragic circumstances. For example, waste management sites that are too close to frontline communities have resulted in massive amounts of waste flowing into communities during and after flooding. The same facilities and practices that contribute to climate change-driven disasters also harm communities that host them every day.	Require toxic and industrial facilities to identify, document, and make public the hazardous materials and conditions, the potential consequences of major releases, the specific measures that can address these scenarios, and possible further measures to reduce hazards.

TABLE 2: Emergency Management Phase: Preparedness & Resilience Building

POLICY	ISSUE AREA	GOVERNANCE	CHALLENGES	EQUITABLE RECOMMENDATIONS
Housing	Insurance (flood, homeowners, secondary)	Congress FEMA State legislatures Housing/ Environmental agencies	Many people cannot afford insurance, or they are under insured. As climate change intensifies, areas that weren't considered flood prone are now vulnerable to catastrophic deluges. As people who aren't in floodplains don't typically get the flood insurance clause in their homeowners insurance, they are left without recourse when disaster strikes.	Advocate for improved insurance policies to protect diverse communities.
Economic	Livelihoods	Congress State legislatures	Communities that lack a resilient and diversified workforce are more vulnerable to disaster capitalism in the aftermath of an emergency.	Revise economic incentives (tax, TIFs, land, occupational, and payroll) so that all private/ public projects will commit to 10% of the project workforce being minority (non-white), and 15% percentage of contractors being minority, women, LGBTQ, and veteran owned. In addition, incorporate job-training programs as needed.

TABLE 3: Emergency Management Phase: Response & Relief

POLICY	ISSUE AREA	GOVERNANCE	CHALLENGES	EQUITABLE RECOMMENDATIONS
Transportation	Evacuation	Department of Transportation Local Planning Department	Low-income and communities of color are often the least mobile and thus the most at risk of perishing or being injured due to an inability to evacuate in time.	Support transit system resilience. Expand public transit access on a regional scale to improve mobility access during extreme weather and other disaster events.
Social Services **Education** **Infrastructure**	Disaster Planning	Congress State legislatures NOAA NWS USGS Local city councils Economic development departments State emergency management	During emergencies, inadequate alert systems can significantly impact vulnerable communities. An alert can go out, but if only English speakers and/ or people with reliable access to the Internet can receive the alert, it's not equitable. To that end, cities and states must build out accessible, efficient, multilingual, and multiplatform community alert systems *prior* to an emergency to make sure everyone's needs are accounted for.	Invest money in communication and planning strategies to effectively share critical information during emergencies and disasters.

TABLE 4: Emergency Management Phase: Recovery & Redevelopment				
POLICY	**ISSUE AREA**	**GOVERNANCE**	**CHALLENGES**	**EQUITABLE RECOMMENDATIONS**
Housing / Health **Transportation / Emergency Management** **Environmental Protection** **Democracy**	Guidance on Safe Return Access to Muck-Out Kits	Department of Health Local Emergency Management Department Local Housing Agency HUD USDA FEMA EPA	Low-income communities and communities of color are more likely to live in places vulnerable to climate disaster, such as floodplains. There have been innumerable instances of people going back to households with unsafe conditions (mold, other toxic substances) resulting in harmful health exposure. Additionally, as we saw during Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, large-scale evacuation plans that move people out of their homes with no plans for helping people return to their homes can be part of a long-term political strategy to significantly alter the demographics of an area to make certain political agendas more expedient.	Federal, state, and local policymakers must ensure that residents can return to rebuilt, repaired, or newly constructed housing. This includes reforming housing recovery programs to increase housing choice for vulnerable populations, investing in structural improvements to homes that will withstand future disasters, and centering decarbonization efforts during construction. Throughout this process, residents must be guaranteed a political voice, as well as physical shelter and basic needs.
Economic	Livelihoods	State/Local Economic Development Departments	It can take significant time and financial investment for communities to rebuild. Because of this, disasters can have an intergenerational impact on the economic stability of a family if governments don't create placeguards to protect communities from the ongoing cycle of disaster vulnerability.	Work with state leaders to enforce mortgage, tax, utility, and credit forbearance, allowing vulnerable communities the opportunity to rebuild without incurring an economic deficit.

Continuum-Wide Recommendations

In addition to these phase-specific recommendations, there are several continuum-wide recommendations NAACP units can implement. These include:

- Incentivizing participatory budgeting processes for public funds allocated to emergency management, including emergency planning, preparedness, and recovery.
- Expanding resources and tools specific to community planning and capacity building in order to establish a coordinated suite of assistance that enhances and streamlines access to the recovery expertise needed by impacted communities.
- Enforcing air quality regulations, mandating air quality monitoring, and making data more accessible to the public.

Develop Policy Solutions

Once you have overviewed potential policy recommendations, you will be better prepared to develop equitable policy solutions with and for your community. Like every aspect of emergency management, this process begins on the local level.

Local officials shape laws, policies, and budgets that aid in emergency mitigation, preparedness, relief, and response practices. State lawmakers in turn enact laws, policies, and budgets that shape emergency management practices on the state level. If a state anticipates that its resources may be exceeded, the governor may request assistance from other states or the Federal government.

In this section we outline how to engage in legislative advocacy on the local, state, and federal levels to create a more equitable emergency management system.

What is Legislative Advocacy?

Legislative advocacy is when an individual or community advocates for a policy or law in front of governing bodies (such as a city council or state congress). Examples of legislative advocacy include advocating for a bill supporting specific legislation, or advocating for a local ordinance (such as zoning policies) that reflect community concerns.

Passing Local Policy

Most city councils can take action in one of two ways: through ordinance or resolution. An ordinance is a rule, law, or statute passed by a locality such as a city, town, or county. An ordinance has the force of law and is more permanent than a resolution. A resolution is a formal expression of intention or the position of a city or county. While resolutions tend to have less permanence and be less detailed than an ordinance, this can sometimes make resolutions an appropriate initial step in a campaign to change local policy.

Influence Policymakers

There are many ways that constituents can contact elected representatives to share concerns and priorities surrounding emergency management, such as organizing a personal visit, writing a letter, and/or making a phone call. Regardless of which method you choose, always remember to be polite, make a cogent, assertive, and respectful argument, and ask for a response. It also helps to transmit both your request and their response in writing so that you have an indisputable record of their positions and promises.

Personal Visit

For most members of the House and Senate, one of the most effective ways to communicate your concerns is face-to-face. Although you can visit alone, it's more meaningful to visit with others. Below, we share a few pointers on how to conduct a personal visit with a legislator. Please coordinate with the NAACP's Policy and Legislative Affairs Team for an effective visit.

1. **Schedule a visit**

   - **Call the legislator's office to schedule an appointment.** If you have access to the Internet, you will be able to find the legislator's office phone number online on the legislator's webpage (house.gov or senate.gov). Those without access to the Internet can get the local office number from the telephone book (look under the legislator's name) or a Member of Congress' D.C. number by calling the Capitol Switchboard in D.C. (202-224-3121).
   - **Ask to speak to the appointment secretary and request a meeting**. State the issue you want to discuss, how many people will be coming, whether you represent a group, preferred dates for visiting, and how long you want to speak with the Member.
   - **If after several calls you still don't have an appointment, find several community leaders to support you**. Have them call or write using letterhead to request a meeting.
   - **Members of Congress will often also ask that a letter be emailed, faxed, or mailed to their office with the same information.** Prepare that letter in advance in coordination with the NAACP Policy and Legislative Affairs Team.

2. **Prepare for the visit**

   - **Organize your group.** Two to five people will fit comfortably in most D.C. and local offices.
   - **Decide what your message will be and what specific action you want.** Make a list of "key points" and include ways that constituents are affected.
   - **Decide who will say what.** Who will start the meeting to say why you've come? Who will ask which questions? Who will ask the legislator to take specific action? Who will thank the legislator at the end of the visit? Note that visits may be cut short, so be prepared to state your message and make your request in a few minutes.
   - **Take a fact sheet, newspaper article or any supporting information that supports your view.** Give it to the legislator at the end of the meeting.

3. **Visit the legislator**

- **Take the initiative.** Have everyone introduce themselves and briefly explain their personal relationship to the issue as well as any relevant organizations that they belong to (such as the NAACP).

- **State your message briefly and succinctly.** State your view, your reasons for having that view ("key points"), and other constituents who share your view (including organizations).

- **Ask for a specific action.** Be sure to ask how they plan to vote. If they say that the bill is being rewritten or amended, ask for the legislator's position on the bill as originally written. KEEP ASKING UNTIL YOU GET SOME ANSWER. If they don't have a position, ask how they plan to decide.

4. **Take next steps**

- Write a letter to the legislator or staff person, thanking them for the meeting, briefly restating key points and reminding them of commitments they made.

- Report on the visit to your organization, congregation, or other interested group (e.g. NAACP branch, ECJ Committee, local VOAD).

- Call local media groups to report what occurred during your visit.

Write a letter

Because office visits are sometimes difficult to schedule, especially in a timely manner, letter writing is usually the next best option. Handwritten (or personalized typed) letters are usually the best, since they convey to your elected representative that this issue is important enough to you that you took the time to write a personal letter. Short of that, a form letter is also effective, and postcards and petitions can be useful as well in making a point.

For all your written correspondence it is usually a good idea to put a reference line (i.e., RE: SUPPORT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE LEGISLATION) near the top of your letter (above the salutation), so the subject of your letter is never in doubt. Also, you should always ask for a response near the end of your letter indicating the member's position on the issue, and what he/she intends to do.

Make a phone call

Phone calls are also effective advocacy tools. To contact your Representatives / Senators in their Washington, DC office, you can dial the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be patched through to your Senators / Representative. In every case, when you call your Representative or Senators, you should always be polite, speak clearly, and leave your name and address and ask for a response.

Use Stories as Advocacy Tools

In addition to putting pressure on legislators, telling stories is another way to practice people power. This is because powerful stories of people's lived experience can change how people view the world. Whether it is advocating for policy change or communicating with the media, telling stories is one of the most effective strategies we can use to build equity into the emergency management process.

Craft a Story-based Strategy

As many NAACP organizers in our network have shared with us, media attention can help disaster-impacted communities secure funding after an emergency. In our work, we use tools from our allies at The Center for Story-based Strategy to explain how to harness the power of story telling to move decision makers and the public to action.

Story-based strategy is a framework that harnesses the power of narratives for social change. The goal is to craft stories that help us make connections, build relationships, and mobilize people to act. Within the context of emergency management, story-based strategy is a tool for telling stories that effectively challenge the "status quo" or opposition. For example, an "opposition" story may be one that portrays the population of people who did not evacuate before a disaster as foolish but fails to include context about the limitations that these groups faced in being able to evacuate (such as a lack of transportation). Our work is to meaningfully reflect on the impact of an oppositional story in order to rewrite the dominant narratives.

As we consider how to tell stories that better reflect people's realities during times of immense instability, we look to **F.R.A.M.E.S**. **F.R.A.M.E.S.** is a useful acronym to use before moving a message from the drawing board out into the world. Refer to the F.R.A.M.E.S table in the Appendix for guiding questions to support you and your team in this process.

To dive deeper into narrative-strategy go to storybasedstrategy.org.

Work with the Media to Expose Injustice

Telling stories of lived experiences is one of the most powerful ways to expose—and ultimately to change—inequities in emergency management. This is why understanding how to effectively pitch a reporter is key. Here are some things to keep in mind when crafting a one-to-two-paragraph pitch:

✓ **Be detailed but brief**

It is important that the pitch is concise and gets to the point quickly. At the same time, including relevant details such as dates and names helps give the story credibility.

✓ **Explain why the story is important**

Clarify the stakes! Make things easy on the reporter and don't assume that the relevance of the story will be immediately apparent.

✓ **Contact a relevant journalist/news outlet**

Do some research before submitting a pitch to identify a news outlet and journalist who will be most likely to pick up your story.

✓ **Follow up**

Some reporters receive hundreds (sometimes thousands) of emails a day. Follow up within a week if you don't hear back right away.

Module 4 Resources

The State and Local Government Directory
statelocalgov.net

"Organizing for Legislative Advocacy" by the Community Toolbox
ctb.ku.edu/en/justice-action-toolkit

"Decarbonizing Buildings is Vital to Climate Action"
unops.org/news-and-stories/insights/decarbonizing-buildings-is-vital-to-climate-action

Climate Justice Narrative by Communications HUB
climateaccess.org/resource/climate-justice-narrative

Federal Advocacy Tools from the NAACP Policy
and Legislative Department
naacp.org/issues/advocacy-litigation

Center for Story-based Strategy
storybasedstrategy.org

CLOSING REFLECTION

Emergency Recovery and
Redevelopment →

Equity in Emergency Recovery
and Redevelopment →
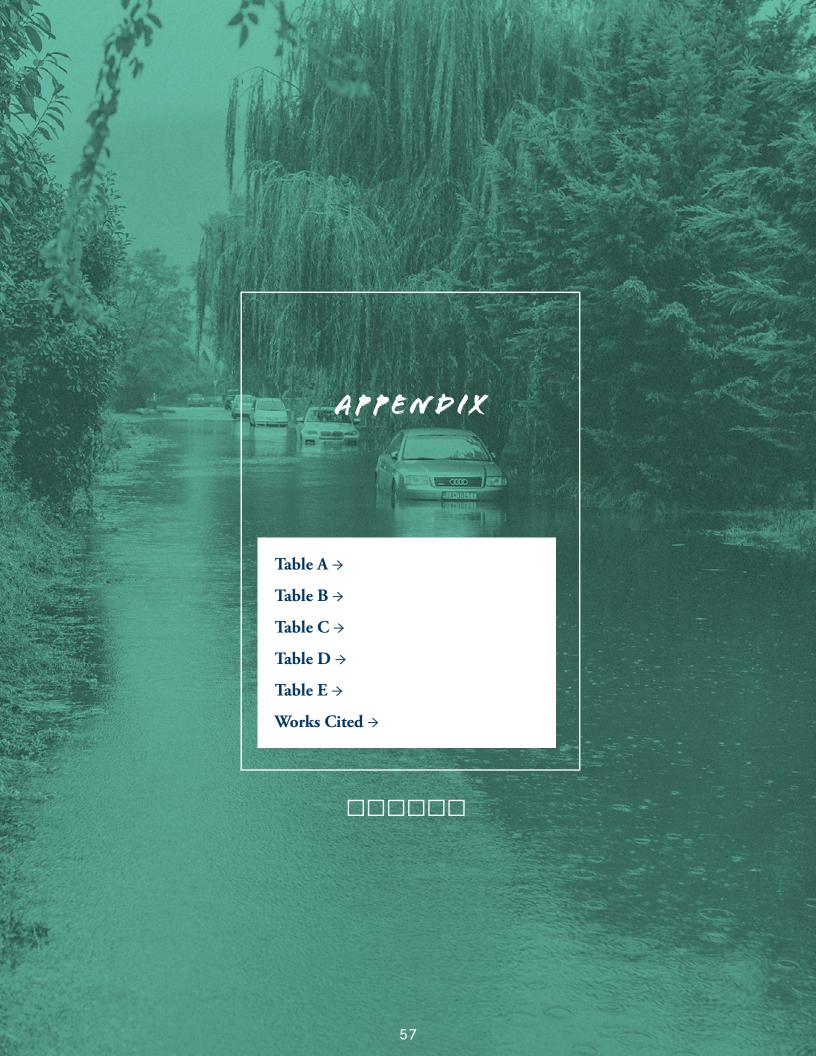
Emergency Recovery and Redevelopment

The final phase of the emergency management continuum is Emergency Recovery and Redevelopment. This phase can be broken into two periods: the short-term phase when a community responds to immediate post-disaster needs, and the long-term phase when a community implements a strategy for the future that addresses the root causes of the disaster. Recovery and redevelopment activities include:

✓ Coordinating housing for displaced people

✓ Rebuilding damaged structures

✓ Investing in services—such as climate landscaping—that support long-term recovery and redevelopment

Equity in Emergency Recovery and Redevelopment

As past disasters show us, "recovery" is often mapped by extractive practices. Politicians might seek to take advantage of instability to push through unpopular policies, and/or disaster capitalists might work to make a profit from redeveloping damaged areas.[12] For example: although decarbonization is an important process in mitigating climate chaos, many of the structures offered to communities in the aftermath of disasters only exacerbate the same issues—such as shoddily constructed and carbon-intensive infrastructure—that created the problem. It's also important during the recovery and redevelopment phase that redevelopers ensure (1) any excavation is deep enough to remove toxins from the debris of the disaster; and (2) the soil quality is healthy enough for all people to be able to enjoy the land. An equitable redevelopment process means not just replacing structures but truly *rebuilding* communities so that they can better withstand the coming storm.

Just as disaster recovery efforts can deepen inequality, recovery also provides an opportunity to improve our collective conditions by centering regenerative and resilient practices. Because of this, the goal of recovery efforts isn't only to fix the immediate damages from a disaster but also to advance a long-term vision for our communities rooted in justice.

APPENDIX

TABLE A: Pre-existing Vulnerabilities and Assets

CATEGORY	VULNERABILITY AND ASSET CONSIDERATIONS	
Demographics	• Age • Gender and sexual orientation • Immigration status • Race/ethnicity/indigeneity	• Income/wealth • Employment • Education • Disability
Housing Security	• Homeowners • Renters • Location (floodplain, edge habitat) • Availability and access to vouchers for insurance assistance	
Mobility	• Homes with vehicles • Public transportation availability and access • Evacuation routes	
Health Status / System / Services	• Individuals with health insurance coverage • Persons with pre-existing health conditions • Mental health services • Substance abuse services	• Intimate partner violence hotline • Distance to nearest hospital
Environmental Hazards	• Air quality • Proximity of schools to brownfields/toxic sites • Adequate/effective waste management systems	• Water infrastructure system • Existing industrial industries

Emergency Services	• Household knowledge level of disaster
	  resources
	• Availability of HAZMAT certification programs
	• HAZMAT certified individuals
	• Disaster plans in place and quality of plans
		• Pre-disaster mental health preparation
		  for first responders
		• Existing disaster alert system
		• Community knowledge of alert system

Governance Policies	• Inclusive governance with appropriate representation • Extent to which the decision makers reflect the demographics • Health codes, building codes, zoning codes • Labor policies (including local hire provisions)	

TABLE B: Emergency Support Functions

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES
Transportation	• State Departments of Transportation • Local Public Works Departments	• Aviation/airspace management and control • Transportation safety • Restoration and recovery of transportation infrastructure • Movement restrictions • Damage and impact assessment
Communication	• State Offices of Emergency Communications • Local IT and communications departments	• Coordination with telecommunications and information technology industries • Restoration and repair of telecommunications infrastructure • Protection, restoration, and sustainment of national cyber and information technology resources • Oversight of communications within the Federal incident management and response structures
Public Works and Engineering	• State and local public works agencies • County engineering departments	• Infrastructure protection and emergency repair • Infrastructure restoration • Engineering services and construction management • Emergency contracting support for life-saving and life-sustaining services
Firefighting	• State Forestry and Fire Protection Agencies • Local Fire Departments	• Coordination of Federal firefighting activities • Support to wildland, rural, and urban firefighting operations
Emergency Management and Resource Support	• State Emergency Management Agency • County and City Offices of Emergency Management	• Coordination of incident management and response efforts • Issuance of mission assignments • Resource and human capital • Incident action planning • Financial management
Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, Human Services	• State Homeland Security and Emergency Services • State Emergency Management Agencies • State Departments of Human Services	• Mass care • Emergency assistance • Disaster housing • Human services

TABLE B: Continued...

Logistics Management and Resource Support	• State Departments of General Services	• Comprehensive, national incident logistics planning, management, and sustainment capability • Resource support (facility space, office equipment & supplies, contracting services, etc.)
Public Health and Medical Services	• State Departments of Health • County and City Public Health Departments • Local hospitals	• Public health • Medical • Mental health services • Mass fatality management
Search and Rescue	• State Homeland Security and Emergency Services	• Life-saving assistance • Search and rescue operations
Oil and Hazardous Materials Response	• State Environmental Protection or Environmental Quality Agencies • Local Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) Teams	• Oil and hazardous materials response (chemical, biological, radiological, etc.) • Environmental short- and long-term cleanup
Agriculture and Natural Resources	• State Departments of Agriculture • Local Cooperative Extension Offices • State Animal Health Boards	• Nutrition assistance • Animal and plant disease and pest response • Food safety and security • Natural and cultural resources and historic properties protection • Safety and well-being of household pets
Energy	• State Energy Offices • Local Utility Authorities or Commissions	• Energy infrastructure assessment, repair, and restoration • Energy industry utilities coordination • Energy forecast
Public Safety and Security	• State Departments of Justice	• Facility and resource security • Security planning and technical resource assistance • Public safety and security support • Support to access, traffic, and crowd control
Long Term Community Recovery	• State Homeland Security and Emergency Services • State Emergency Management Agencies	• Social & economic community impact assessment • Long-term community recovery assistance to States, tribes, local governments, and the private sector • Analysis and review of mitigation program implementation
External Affairs	• State Homeland Security and Emergency Services	• Emergency public information and protective action guidance • Media and community relations • Congressional and international affairs; Tribal and insular affairs

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TABLE C: General Damage Assessment

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Name

Date | **Phone Number**

Agency / Organization Affiliation
(if applicable)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Location (City, County)

Type of Incident

**Description
of Incident**

DEMOGRAPHICS

Race / Ethnicity of Affected Population

Income Levels of Affected Populations (Including sources of income, if possible)

Age of Affected Populations

**Other Pertinent Information
about Affected Population**

STATISTICAL INFORMATION *(Number Of)*

Injuries | **Evacuated**

Deaths | **Displaced**

Hospitalizations | **Missing**

Special Issues
(Housing shortages, illnesses, etc.)

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TABLE D: Response Monitoring Tool

QUESTIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Communications How has information about the emergency been shared? In which languages? Who received the information and who did not? Are there other methods that should have been used? These include: • Canvassing door-to-door • TV, radio, print, and digital media • Town hall meetings • Flyer/leaflets • Opt-in robocalls or texts	
Disaster declaration Are there areas that are severely impacted that were not included in the disaster declaration? If so, which areas?	
Availability of services What is the availability and accessibility of services? Examples of services include: • Safety information • Communications • Rescue efforts • Transportation • Mental health services • Financial assistance • Reunification services	
Distribution of services Are there areas or communities that are not receiving services or attention?	
Special accommodations Are there accommodations for people with special needs or special circumstances, including: • Aging populations • People with mobility needs • Differently abled people • Incarcerated people • People who are LGBTQIA+ • People who are undocumented • Immigrants and people with special language access issues?	

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QUESTIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Service providers What is the attitude of service providers (i.e. warm, welcoming, etc.)? Document any examples of condescending behavior or providers acting in a suspicious or prohibitive manner when people are seeking services.	
Evacuation What was the experience of households/ communities confronted with evacuation? What was the notification system? Was support and facilitation adequate? Were people notified in a timely fashion on how they should evacuate? Did people have adequate help in being evacuated? Were incarcerated or detained persons evacuated? Was transportation provided for people without access to private vehicles?	
Rescue operations What was the experience of communities with rescue operations? Was there preference given to certain communities during the rescue operations? Describe any discrepancies.	
Undocumented persons Are authorities targeting undocumented persons? Are undocumented persons seeking services?	
Workers' protections What are the measures for workers' protection and upholding worker rights, particularly for prison labor that is often used in disaster circumstances? To the extent that incarcerated persons are engaged, what training is provided? What kind of protective gear is provided? Is the service of incarcerated persons voluntary?	
Policing What are the policing priorities and emphases during the emergency? Are certain groups more heavily policed? What are the policing practices (e.g. militarization of police)?	

TABLE D: Continued...

QUESTIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Animals What accommodations are made for animals and/or pets? Are these accommodations offered equally across communities?	
People with Disabilities What accommodations were provided to people with disabilities? Were those people evacuated to ADA-compliant shelters? Were they institutionalized against their will? Allowed to stay with their families?	

TABLE E: F.R.A.M.E.S.

F.R.A.M.E.S. COMPONENT	YOUR RESPONSE
F = Frame the Issue Does it reinforce the vision and values that you are promoting? Framing means defining the problem, who will be broadly impacted, and the solution.	
R = Reframe Opponent's Story and Reinforce Our Frame Make sure your message is not just reiterating your opponent's frame. Reframing means changing the terms of debate on the issue.	
A = Accessible to the Audience Who is your message trying to persuade? Be as specific as possible about the audience and ensure that the message is crafted in terms of language, context, and values that will be appealing to them.	
M = Memorable The message has got to be memorable, easy to spread, and "sticky." How can you encapsulate your message in a symbol, slogan, or metaphor that captures the essence?	
E = Emotional People don't sing into action because of a pie chart. An effective message should speak to people in terms of values, and deliver some emotional impact. Trigger emotional responses with themes like tragedy, hope, anger, frustration, and don't forget joy!	
S = Simple and Short This means to get to the core essence of the issue. What is the most important point of the issue? What is it that makes it matter to your audience?	

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This toolkit is a joint initiative between the NAACP Center for Environmental and Climate Justice and Counterstream Media.

The **NAACP Center for Environmental and Climate Justice** advocates to transform or eliminate unjust systems and policies to build a cleaner and healthier environment and climate for communities of color. The Center supports community-driven work to ensure a right to a toxic free environment, energy democracy, promote ecological restoration that centers zero emissions, and build community resilience.

Learn more at **naacp.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice**

COUNTERSTREAM MEDIA centers the stories and perspectives the mainstream media often miss. We are a nonprofit media organization that uses journalism and storytelling to challenge harmful narratives and work towards Environmental Justice. Through our podcasts, publications, and live storytelling events, we amplify frontline voices and influence how culture and policy take shape.

Learn more at **counterstream.org**

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