

## MONTANA POST-DISASTER DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS

This document is to inform local officials of a plan to increase the efficiency of post-disaster damage assessments. State Disaster and Emergency Services and Department of Natural Resources (Floodplain Program) are working collaboratively (along with federal partners and other agencies) to provide assistance to local communities in gathering this important information. DES Coordinators for Park, Stillwater, and Carbon Counties have been included in the email alongside the Floodplain Administrators for both the counties and cities and towns. Each has been asked to ensure the plan is shared with their elected officials and other relevant parties.

Montana is making every effort to coordinate state and federal agencies. Our goal is to quicken the answers and aid available to both you and your citizens. We aim to minimize disruption to property owners and present unified communication.

### *Types of post-disaster assessments*

There are several types of damage assessments, such as initial damage assessment, substantial damage assessment, individual assistance preliminary damage, and public assistance assessments. Assessments are conducted for somewhat different reasons and may be conducted by different organizations. There are also assessments that non-government agencies may be interested in conducting, such as the Red Cross or insurance agencies. The table below defines a few of the damage assessments being discussed by various government agencies.

TYPES OF POST-DISASTER ASSESSMENTS			
Assessment	Who'll be in your community	Purpose	Area of interest
Initial Damage Survey	MT DNRC Fire (County Assist Teams- CAT) <i>Already conducted</i>	Gain situational awareness as soon as safely possible following the disaster event. Gather high-level data to assist in streamlining more detailed assessments.  In this flood event, CAT evaluated both structures and infrastructure. The survey categorized damage severity into three categories, completely destroyed, partially destroyed, and minor damage. Evaluators also estimated % damaged. This initial pass through was critical to gain a quick scope of the damages, but a more extensive and detailed assessment is required to compile the damage inventory for IA, PA, and SDE).	County-wide  (Conducted in Park, Stillwater, and Carbon Counties on 6/16)
Individual Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment (IA-PDA)	MT DES and FEMA	Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) are conducted to enable FEMA — as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial partners — to determine the magnitude of damage and impact of disasters.  The focus for Individual Assistance PDAs is habitability, meaning whether the survivor can safely continue to live in the structure. Damages to homes and businesses are broken down into five categories for an IA PDA: destroyed, major, minor, inaccessible and affected.  Montana's Presidential Disaster Declaration for the event does not currently include Individual Assistance, so these	Disaster-affected areas, with a focus on most impacted locations first

		Assessments are critical to determining whether or not the State will be eligible to receive these programs.	
Substantial Damage Estimation (SDE)	MT DNRC Floodplain Program	<p>A determination of “substantial damage” applies to a severely damaged home or other structure in a Special Flood Hazard Area, where the community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FEMA does not make substantial damage determinations; <u>the determination is made by a local building official or floodplain manager.</u></p> <p>If the cost of repairing the structure is 50 percent or more of its market value before the disaster, it is considered substantially damaged. Land value is not a consideration; the determination is based only on the value of the structure.</p>	Regulatory floodplain (the Special Flood Hazard Area appearing on FEMA flood maps)
Public Assistance PDA (PA-PDA)	MT DES and FEMA	<p>Public Assistance is a reimbursement program that provides a federal funding cost share of eligible disaster-related debris removal, emergency protective measures to protect life and property, and permanent repair work to damaged public infrastructure. FEMA works with applicants to compile their damage inventory, a detailed list that may include emergency work performed and disaster-damaged roads, facilities and other infrastructure.</p> <p>Montana’s Presidential Disaster Declaration includes Public Assistance for Park, Stillwater, and Carbon Counties, and the Preliminary Damage Assessments were already done through initial assessments of the impacts. More detailed data will be gathered as the jurisdictions go through the next steps. Additional affected counties may become eligible for Public Assistance as their damages are assessed.</p>	Disaster-affected public infrastructure, with a focus on most impacted locations first

Information about IA and PA Preliminary Damage Assessments provided by FEMA can be found here: [Preliminary Damage Assessments | FEMA.gov](#)

Information about Substantial Damage Determinations provided by FEMA can be found here: [Substantial Damage Determinations | FEMA.gov](#)

***Upcoming assessments in your community***

Property owners will notice IA-PDA and SDE assessments, as teams will be out in your community inspecting homes. As much as possible, MT DES and DNRC intend to combine visits, so property owners don’t feel overwhelmed. This document will detail the vision for these combined visits. PA-PDA teams may also be in your community during the same time, The focus of PA-PDA teams will be on public infrastructure and there is not a need to coordinate assessments in-step with the IA-PDA teams. However, if the Floodplain Administrator (FPA) for a given community has also been delegated as the local recovery lead, that person will need to participate in the PA-PDA process. Deconfliction of local officials will require good internal communication within each jurisdiction and clarification of roles and responsibilities to DNRC and DES.

Because floods of this magnitude don't occur frequently in Montana, MT DES and DNRC have requested support from other states to bolster both expertise and manpower. Several states have answered the call, including South Carolina, Florida, and Colorado. The technical term for the state-to-state agreement that allowed these experts to come in is called Emergency Management Assistance Compact, and you might hear these folks referenced as EMAC. They are not State of Montana employees but are here to support the assessments and act as an extension of MT DES or DNRC.

There will be 3 to 5 SDE teams. Each SDE team will be comprised of 1 MT DNRC employee, 1 EMAC SDE expert, and 1 local official. The NFIP dictates that the determination of substantial damage must be made at the local level, typically by the local floodplain administrator, thus local officials must participate on the SDE teams. Substantial damage determinations are a part of an NFIP-participating community's local program, State support for SDE assessment is provided at the request of the community. Each team will have a dedicated vehicle (transportation logistics for SDE teams led by DNRC). SDE teams will be managed by MT DNRC NFIP Coordinator Traci Sears ([tsears@mt.gov](mailto:tsears@mt.gov)).

There will be 3 to 5 IA-PDA teams. Each IA-PDA team will be comprised of 1 FEMA representative, 1 IA expert, 1 Small Business Association representative, and 1 Red Cross member. Each team will have a dedicated vehicle (transportation logistics for IA-PDA teams led by DES). IA-PDA teams will be managed by MT DES State Hazard Mitigation Officer Sara Hartley ([sara.hartley@mt.gov](mailto:sara.hartley@mt.gov)). The PA-PDA teams, which won't work side-by-side with IA or SDE teams as they move through your area, will be managed by MT DES Response, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau Chief Jake Ganieany ([jake.ganieany@mt.gov](mailto:jake.ganieany@mt.gov)).

Each IA-PDA team will have an ipad tablet for data collection and will populate a GIS-enabled survey for IA reporting. Likewise, each SDE team will have an ipad tablet, theirs enabled with a SDE survey.

Although there are 3 to 5 teams, teams will be deployed in-tandem to give communities more on-the-ground manpower. Three teams will begin on the western side, in Park County, and two teams will begin on the eastern side, in Carbon County. Teams will work with one jurisdiction at time and move towards central jurisdictions. Flathead County has also been added to the fieldwork list.

TEAM COMPOSITIONS AND MOVEMENTS						
West to East				East to West		
<b>SDE Teams</b>	MT DNRC	MT DNRC	MT DNRC	MT DNRC	MT DNRC	MT DNRC
	EMAC (NFIP)	EMAC (NFIP)	EMAC (NFIP)	EMAC (NFIP)	EMAC (NFIP)	EMAC (NFIP)
	Local official	Local official	Local official	Local official	Local official	Local official
<b>IA Teams</b>	FEMA rep.	FEMA rep.	FEMA rep.	FEMA rep.	FEMA rep.	FEMA rep.
	State (IA)	State (IA)	State (IA)	State (IA)	State (IA)	State (IA)
	SBA rep.	SBA rep.	SBA rep.	SBA rep.	SBA rep.	SBA rep.
	Red Cross	Red Cross	Red Cross	Red Cross	Red Cross	Red Cross

The goal is to have SDE and IA teams visit property addresses together, however the SDE team may be the first to visit with the IA team following closely behind. The tams will conduct IA-PDA and SDE fieldwork until complete for a given jurisdiction. Each time teams move to a new jurisdiction, the local officials will also need to change (i.e., a county official cannot be the local representative for city properties, and vice versa—however coordination is encouraged, and cross-jurisdiction representatives are welcome to support teams as general members). If teams finish early in one area, they will move to assist other teams.

On Sunday, SDE teams will work with jurisdictions to validate completed fieldwork (i.e., are the results making sense for what we saw in the field, and the inputs we submitted?). Because substantial damage determinations are a locally managed program, SDE teams will work with local officials to plan the move from fieldwork to next steps.

All teams will be staying in Columbus in Stillwater County for the Park, Carbon, and Stillwater assessments. This will facilitate cross-team communication. The Northwest (Flathead County) teams will stay at the Holiday Inn Express in Kalispell.

ESTIMATED TIMEFRAME						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
6/19	6/20	6/21	6/22	6/23	6/24	6/25
	Federal and EMAC support arrives.	Federal and EMAC support arrives.	State Training in Helena.	Teams depart.  Morning workshop in Park and Carbon (simultaneous).  Assessments begin in Fromberg and Park County.	Fieldwork continues. -Fromberg -Red Lodge -Park County	Fieldwork continues. -Red Lodge -Carbon County -Park County
6/26	6/27	6/28	6/29	6/30	7/1	7/2
SDE office work (determinations with excel sheet).  Goal is to reach Stillwater County no later than Sunday.	Fieldwork continues. -Stillwater County -Carbon County	Fieldwork continues. -Stillwater County -Carbon County	Fieldwork continues. -Carbon County  (Teams will have to make additional visits in the next two weeks)	Fieldwork continues. -Flathead County	Fieldwork continues. -Flathead County	TBD.

**Ways local officials can support streamlined assessments**

- 1. Share the MT DES Personal Property Damage Form (<https://des.mt.gov>).** This is an online survey you can share with your private property owners for them to report flood damage to their property. Like the CAT data, results will help inform upcoming assessments and support the state’s case for federal recovery funding.
- 2. Dedicate 2-3 members who can join teams, give them early notice, and ensure they can be paid for weekend work.** The determination of substantial damage must be made at the local level, so each SDE team must have a local representative. Work will be conducted on the weekends. EMAC volunteers, state employees, and locals have volunteered to leave their families and jobs and we want to be respectful of their time, and that means being efficient.
- 3. Assist in the identification and prioritization of visit areas.** IA-PDAs should examine the most damaged areas. The data from the DNRC Fire CAT Initial Damage Assessment can be used to identify priority areas and plan efficient routes. Further, SDE teams need to examine all structures in the SFHA. But if CAT data demonstrates that an entire area of the SFHA was unaffected (for example, along a smaller tributary or in a neighborhood where emergency action blocked flow), those structures may not require extensive examinations.
- 4. Be flexible.** If your community or county is not one of the two starting locations, we understand that adds a bit of planning difficult for you and the personnel that will be assisting in assessments. FPAs and DES Coordinators will receive communication from the DNRC and DES about the progress of each day’s assessments, and the best

estimation of when teams will arrive to the next jurisdictions. Know that all teams will be working as efficiently as possible to visit your community.

### ***Training***

On Wednesday June 22, comprehensive training will be held in Helena for state and federal employees. Two simultaneous training sessions will be held at the local level on Thursday morning starting at 9:30 am, one in Livingston and the other in Fromberg. Local officials are be asked to facilitate space. Stillwater County, Yellowstone County, and all Carbon County incorporated participating communities will be invited to join the training in Fromberg. Communities are requested to have FPA, DES Coordinator, and/or any representatives tasked to join a SDE Team participate in the training. As soon as training is complete, fieldwork will begin Thursday afternoon.

### ***Public outreach***

A template press release has been drafted by DES and DNRC and is shared in the email with this document.

### ***Next steps for Individual and Public Assistance PDAs***

Data will be compiled based on the assessments to determine what additional funding opportunities may be available to jurisdictions and/or individuals. Depending on the collective level of damages, FEMA's Individual Assistance Program may be activated, which provides grant money and services to people in the declared area whose property has been damaged or destroyed and whose losses are not covered by insurance.

### ***Next steps for Substantial Damage Determinations***

1. Determine if structures are substantially damaged. The SDE survey used during inspection is only step one of the substantial damage determination process. Floodplain administrators have been notified that FEMA has a desktop tool for substantial damage estimating. While MT DNRC recommends using the FEMA SDE method, the desktop tool can be a bit cumbersome. Instead, the South Carolina DNR Floodplain has translated the internal calculations into an easy-to-use excel spreadsheet. SDE teams will work with local floodplain administrators to populate the SDE excel spreadsheet and review the results.
2. Notify property owners of the results of the determination. All property owners should receive a notice of the results of the substantial damage estimation (either substantially damaged or not substantially damaged). SDE teams will work with local floodplain administrators to draft notification letters.