



# National Preparedness System

*November 2011*



Homeland  
Security



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## Introduction

Our Nation faces a wide range of threats and hazards, including acts of terrorism, cyber attacks, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters. Communities can address the risks these threats and hazards pose by working together using a systematic approach that builds on proven preparedness activities. The National Preparedness System builds on these activities and enables the Nation to meet the National Preparedness Goal. This document summarizes the components of the National Preparedness System, which include: identifying and assessing risk, estimating the level of capabilities needed to address those risks, building or sustaining the required levels of capability, developing and implementing plans to deliver those capabilities, validating and monitoring progress, and reviewing and updating efforts to promote continuous improvement.

Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) describes the Nation's approach to national preparedness. The National Preparedness Goal is the cornerstone for the implementation of PPD-8; identified within it are the Nation's core capabilities across five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.<sup>1</sup> The National Preparedness System is the instrument the Nation will employ to build, sustain, and deliver those core capabilities in order to achieve the goal of a secure and resilient Nation. The guidance, programs, processes, and systems that support each component of the National Preparedness System enable a collaborative, whole community approach to national preparedness that engages individuals, families, communities, private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government.

The National Preparedness System builds on current efforts, many of which are established in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act and other statutes. Through the implementation of the National Preparedness System, these efforts will be integrated to be more efficient and effective, supporting our Nation's ability to confront any threat or hazard. Where needed, new tools and processes will be developed to meet the challenges of each mission area. Implementing the National Preparedness System will be a multi-year effort requiring contributions from the entire Nation.

## National Preparedness System Components

Capabilities are the means to accomplish a mission, function, or objective based on the performance of related tasks, under specified conditions, to target levels of performance. The most essential of these capabilities are the core capabilities identified in the National Preparedness Goal. Complex and far-reaching threats and hazards require the whole community to integrate preparedness efforts in order to build, sustain, and deliver the core capabilities and achieve the desired outcomes identified in the National Preparedness Goal. The components of the National Preparedness System provide a consistent and reliable approach to support decision making, resource allocation, and measure progress toward these outcomes. The maturation and use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) will aid in ensuring a unified approach across all mission areas as the National Preparedness System is implemented.



**Figure 1: Mission Area Components of the National Preparedness System**

<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on the mission areas can be found in the National Preparedness Goal.



While each of the components of the National Preparedness System is essential, to achieve preparedness, it is critical that the components be understood and used in the context of each other. Ultimately, this integrated approach becomes a means to achieve the National Preparedness Goal in a consistent and measurable way.

### *Identifying and Assessing Risk*

Developing and maintaining an understanding of the variety of risks faced by communities and the Nation, and how this information can be used to build and sustain preparedness, are essential components of the National Preparedness System. Risk varies across the Nation—for example, a municipal risk assessment will reflect a subset of the threats and hazards contained in a state or Federal risk assessment.

A risk assessment collects information regarding the threats and hazards, including the projected consequences or impacts. The Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) guidance currently under development will provide a common, consistent approach for identifying and assessing risks and associated impacts. The THIRA guidance will expand on existing state, territorial, tribal, and local hazard identification and risk assessments. Using the THIRA process will enable better integration of threat into the risk assessment process. To be effective, the THIRA process requires the participation of the whole community to share information, account for population-specific factors, and understand the initial and cascading effects of a threat or hazard. Analysis of the THIRA results will guide future preparedness efforts across all mission areas. The analysis can also be used to educate individuals, families, businesses, organizations, and executive leaders on the risks facing a community and on their roles in preparedness.

At the national level, the Strategic National Risk Assessment (SNRA) analyzes the greatest risks to the Nation. This analysis contributes to our shared understanding of the full range of threats, hazards, and challenges facing our Nation as well as greater visibility of long-term risk trends. The SNRA will continue to be refined and will integrate information from across the whole community. The results of the SNRA will be used to prioritize preparedness activities at the national level and inform risk assessment efforts at every level of government.

THIRAs, the SNRA, and specialized risk assessments, taken together, will provide an integrated picture of the risks facing our Nation. This picture will cover the range of threats and hazards, from those our communities face daily to those infrequent events that would stress the core capabilities of the entire Nation. Coupled with the desired outcomes established by a community, this combined perspective is crucial to enabling all levels of government to effectively estimate the level of capabilities required to address their risks.

### *Estimating Capability Requirements*

To fully understand capability requirements, each community, organization, and level of government must consider single threats or hazards as well as the full range of risks they may face. Using the results from a risk assessment in the context of the desired outcome(s) for each mission area, the required types and levels of capability can be estimated.

This estimation process begins with developing a set of planning factors. Planning factors can be developed for any mission area. The planning factors are based on assessments of risk and the desired outcome(s) to be achieved. For example, if a desired outcome is to prevent an imminent terrorist attack, then a set of planning factors that help to define the adversary or modes of attack will aid in identifying the level of capability required to prevent the attack. Planning factors can be

changed in size and scope to accommodate impacts from larger and more complex incidents that involve multiple jurisdictions, states, regions, or the entire Nation.

These planning factors help inform decisions about the capability level required and the resources needed to achieve it. Communities can then examine current capability levels through the lenses of real-world incidents, assessments, and exercises to determine whether changes to current capability levels are warranted. This process of comparing current and required capability levels will identify gaps and shortfalls the community may choose to address.

Regardless of the level of government, this capability estimate process uses the planning factors to establish target levels for the related capabilities. This aids in identifying the resources required to achieve those targets. By helping to identify these requirements, this process helps users focus on how they will build and sustain the desired level of capability.

#### **Example of Planning Factors and Estimating Capability**

Planning factors help users of the National Preparedness System make informed decisions about capability requirements. For example, a jurisdiction may identify a response-related planning factor that focuses on the projected number of people injured or exposed across different threats and hazards. After analyzing the risk, the jurisdiction determines that it needs the ability to treat 500 injured or exposed people in the first eight hours after an incident instead of the 400 it can currently treat. The jurisdiction must then decide what measures it will take, which might include engaging the private sector to acquire the capability to treat an additional 100 injured or exposed people in the required timeframe. This approach can also be used at other levels of government. The planning factor would change in scope and size at the state level, for example, and may be even larger at the Federal level. An initial set of adjustable targets can be found in the National Preparedness Goal.

### *Building and Sustaining Capabilities*

After completing the estimation process, existing and needed capabilities can be analyzed and gaps identified. These gaps can be prioritized based on a combination of the desired outcomes, risk assessments, and the potential effects of not addressing the gaps.

Working together, planners, government officials, and elected leaders can develop strategies to allocate resources effectively, as well as leverage available assistance to reduce risk. These strategies consider both how to sustain current levels of capability and address gaps in order to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. Not all capabilities can be addressed in a given funding cycle; officials must prioritize the capabilities to most effectively ensure security and resilience while understanding the effects of not addressing identified gaps. Building and sustaining capabilities will include a combination of organizational resources, equipment, training, and education. Grants and technical assistance may also be available to support building and sustaining capabilities. Consideration must also be given to finding, connecting to, and strengthening community resources by leveraging the expertise and capacity of individuals, communities, private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government. Jurisdictions may also choose to use mutual aid agreements to fill gaps or work with partners to develop regional capabilities. Ultimately, a jurisdiction may need to rely on other levels of government to address a gap in capability. This expectation should be communicated before capabilities are needed.

Organizational resources, like personnel and equipment, provide the basic tools for building and sustaining capabilities. Using expanded resource typing, credentialing (such as the National Incident Management System Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel), and resource inventories that encompass all mission areas will help facilitate these efforts by providing a “common language” for

understanding the resources that comprise the core capabilities and define needs. Additionally, the use of voluntary, consensus-based standards will improve interoperability across the Nation.

As capabilities are built, training and education are used to develop and strengthen the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet each capability's target. The National Training & Education System (NTES) will support the National Preparedness System by enabling the whole community to access needed training and education in support of preparedness. The NTES will work with existing government training facilities, academic institutions, private organizations, and other entities that provide specialized training and education. It will also include, as appropriate, training courses provided by community colleges; state, territorial, tribal, and local public safety academies; and other facilities.

### *Planning to Deliver Capabilities*

The whole community contributes to reducing the Nation's risks. Planning for low-probability, high-consequence risks—such as a terrorist attack with nuclear or biological weapons or a catastrophic earthquake affecting multiple jurisdictions—will be a complex undertaking and involve many partners. Federal efforts, therefore, must complement planning at other levels of government, which is often focused on more likely risks. These shared planning efforts form a National Planning System by which the whole community can think through potential crises, determine capability requirements, and address the collective risk identified during the risk assessment process.

Using a common approach and terminology based on existing guidance documents,<sup>2</sup> the National Planning System will support the delivery of the core capabilities identified in the National Preparedness Goal. First, a set of coordinated National Frameworks will be collaboratively developed that focus on how the whole community prepares to deliver capabilities in each of the five mission areas. Each Framework will describe the coordinating structures and alignment of key roles and responsibilities for the whole community and will be integrated to ensure interoperability across all mission areas.

At the Federal level, each of these Frameworks will be supported by a Federal Interagency Operational Plan. These plans will provide a detailed concept of operations; a description of critical tasks and responsibilities; detailed resource, personnel, and sourcing requirements; and specific provisions for the delivery of capabilities under each Framework by the Federal Government. They will also address how the Federal Government will support state, territorial, tribal, and local plans.

Where needed, each Federal executive department and agency will develop and maintain department-level operational plans to deliver capabilities to fulfill responsibilities under the Frameworks and interagency plans. This will be determined by the respective department or agency and may be based on existing plans, protocols, or standard operating procedures/standard operating guides. These plans will be updated as needed.

The process for the development and the ongoing maintenance of the Frameworks and operational plans will be captured in a National Planning System guide. This guide will complement and build upon existing guidance and doctrine and will support the integration of planning activities. Additionally, in support of planning across the whole community, a set of comprehensive preparedness guides will be developed to provide guidance in support of the five mission areas. These guides will provide flexible decision aids, tools, and templates that can be used to assist with the development and integration of plans. This guidance will support state, territorial, tribal, and local

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<sup>2</sup> Plans should be developed in a manner compatible with the process identified in *Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101* or a similar planning structure relevant to the planning requirement.



governments and address the inclusion of individuals, communities, and businesses into planning efforts.

Using an integrated approach to planning, risks can be systemically managed by effectively using capabilities to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from any threat or hazard. This integration comes from implementing a National Planning System that promotes a consistent planning process and a unified coordinating structure to deliver the capabilities and establish the critical links that span the five mission areas. This integration will help ensure planning accounts for relationships and dependencies among the core capabilities both within and across mission areas.

An integrated approach to planning also helps ensure that plans are synchronized (i.e., in purpose, place, and time). This approach also ensures the whole community participates and understands its roles and the desired outcomes across all mission areas. This aids in establishing mutual expectations, highlighting potential points of friction and key decision points, identifying potential resource shortfalls, and developing the means to bridge those shortfalls. These include the administrative, financial, legal, and logistical barriers to communication, cooperation, and rapid employment of capabilities. These barriers must be identified, examined, and, where possible, removed or minimized. Additionally, identifying and coordinating the statutory authorities that can be used to deliver capabilities during an emergency or imminent threat is important to success.

### *Validating Capabilities*

Measuring progress toward achieving the National Preparedness Goal will provide the means to decide how and where to allocate scarce resources and prioritize preparedness. This can be done through exercises, remedial action management programs, and assessments.

Exercises are conducted to test and validate plans and capabilities. An effective and comprehensive exercise program that includes active collaboration with the whole community is essential to the success of the National Preparedness System. By highlighting strengths and revealing gaps, exercises facilitate the Nation's ability to validate capabilities and evaluate progress toward meeting the National Preparedness Goal. The National Exercise Program (NEP) serves as the principal exercise mechanism for examining national preparedness and measuring readiness. Additionally, numerous exercises are conducted outside of the NEP and serve to assess and validate the capabilities of organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions. For example, businesses test their ability to maintain supply chains during emergencies, and governments test their ability to protect facilities or conduct fire and rescue operations. Guidance and tools are provided through the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program for the design, implementation, and evaluation of exercises.

In addition to exercises, training and real-world events also provide essential information on testing and validating a community's progress toward achieving its desired capabilities. A remedial action management program (RAMP) uses this information to identify and share lessons learned, after-action reports, and best practices from events and exercises when and where appropriate.<sup>3</sup> The RAMP process assists in validating which capabilities are effective and identifying the actions to improve, replace, or eliminate the elements of capabilities that are ineffective.

Ongoing monitoring ensures core capabilities are built to achieve the National Preparedness Goal and that current capabilities are sustained. A comprehensive assessment system (CAS) is used to measure and monitor progress on behalf of the whole community. The purpose of CAS is to:

- Identify capability targets and performance metrics

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of certain real-world events, the timing and extent of reporting will be driven by law enforcement and intelligence requirements.

- Systemically collect and analyze data about capabilities
- Report progress on building and sustaining the required levels of capability.

Exercises, RAMP, and CAS provide the means to evaluate and validate current capabilities at all levels of government and to actively monitor and report progress on building, sustaining, and delivering capabilities. This analysis and reporting, with the National Preparedness Report as the principal product, will aid resource allocation and identify planning requirements to support national preparedness.

### *Reviewing and Updating*

The Nation's security and resilience will be strengthened as it employs the components of the National Preparedness System. Changes in a community's exposure and sensitivity can and do occur, however, whether from evolving threats and hazards, aging infrastructure, shifts in population, or changes in the natural environment. On a recurring basis, capabilities, resources, and plans should be reviewed to determine if they remain relevant or need to be updated. This review should be based on a current risk assessment and utilize information gathered during the validation process. As a part of these efforts, periodic senior-level reviews of national preparedness will be conducted with joint participation from Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local decision makers. These reviews will provide a means to examine preparedness analyses; determine priorities; direct preparedness actions; calibrate goals and objectives; and closely monitor major programs that impact national preparedness.

## **Conclusion**

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This document provides a description of the National Preparedness System's components and how they interact to build, sustain, and deliver the core capabilities in order to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. These components help us understand risk, inform current and future budget year planning and decisions, inform resource allocation plans, and aid in understanding the progress of the Nation.

While the National Preparedness System builds on a number of proven processes, it will evolve to capitalize on new opportunities and meet emerging challenges. Many of the programs and processes that support the components of the National Preparedness System exist and are currently in use; others will need to be updated or developed. As the remaining PPD-8 deliverables are developed, further details will be provided on how the National Preparedness System will be implemented across the five mission areas in order to achieve the National Preparedness Goal.

This document describes a collaborative environment and living system whose components will be routinely evaluated and updated to ensure their continued effectiveness. This environment will be supported through collaboration and cooperation with international partners, including working closely with our neighbors Canada and Mexico, with whom we share common borders. In the end, the National Preparedness System's strength relies on ensuring the whole community has the opportunity to contribute to its implementation to achieve the goal of a secure and resilient Nation.