



Frequently Asked Questions

April 02, 2020

Tribal Declarations and Indian Affairs Role in COVID-19 Response

Q1: Why do tribes declare emergencies?

A1: When tribes declare emergencies to respond to disasters it allows tribe to re-direct their own resources, activate emergency plans, restrict travel, direct tribal programs to close offices, etc. The declaration can also be utilized by tribal leadership to request assistance from states, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or other federal agencies.

A tribal declaration of emergency does not automatically activate FEMA assistance or serve as a request for FEMA assistance.

Q2: When a tribe declares an emergency what is the BIA's role?

A2: If the state of emergency declaration is not accompanied by a specific request(s), BIA Superintendents and/or RDs can forward it the appropriate FEMA, Indian Health Service (his) or other federal partner to help ensure situational awareness for that particular incident.

Q3: What is the process for declaring an emergency?

A3: A tribe's request for FEMA assistance typically starts with the [FEMA Regional Tribal Liaison](#), who will assist the tribe in preparing a direct Presidential Declaration Request including, if appropriate, a request for Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) and other required documentation as outlined in the current [FEMA Tribal Declarations Pilot Guidance](#). The FEMA Regional Tribal Liaison then routes the request to FEMA headquarters. After review, FEMA sends its recommendation for approval or denial to the President.

Q4: What resources are available to tribes when they declare an emergency?

A4: When the Presidential Declaration is approved by the President, FEMA can activate federal funding in the form of Public Assistance or Individual Assistance. This will be provided to the tribe through FEMA at a 75%-25% cost share.

Public Assistance: The Public Assistance (PA) Grant Program supports communities' recovery from major disasters by providing grant assistance for debris removal, life-saving emergency protective measures, and restoring public infrastructure.

Individual Assistance: FEMA's Individual Assistance Program provides financial help or direct services to those who have declared disaster-caused expenses that are not covered by insurance or other means. This assistance can include Housing Assistance (money to rent a temporary housing unit, repair or replacement of existing housing) and Other Needs Assistance (including personal property and other items).

Q5: What resources can the Regional Directors and the Office of Self-Governance provide to tribes for relief assistance?

A5: Regional Directors can provide funds, if they are available, through existing funding mechanisms such as contract agreements. They can also provide heavy equipment or non-medical supplies as available.

Q6: How are the Office of Self-governance and BIA working together to ensure the Self-Governance tribes receive the necessary information and/or support?

A6: BIA Regional offices work with all program areas to ensure tribes receive consistent information about disaster relief opportunities that are available to them.

Q7: What role do the BIA regions play when tribes seek assistance with ordering or securing supplies? What services and information are we providing to tribes?

A7: Regional Directors need to ensure tribes work with the appropriate lead federal agency responsible for providing assistance.

Medical supplies and equipment must be procured through IHS.

- Medical supplies and equipment requests should first be sent through IHS as they have first priority for obtaining these items through the National Strategic Stockpile (NSS). Regional Directors should have a relationship with IHS Area Directors to whom they can direct tribes for assistance.
- Supplemental funding is pending for COVID-19 response. The IHS/HHS/CDC are finalizing the process for tribes to request this funding. When it is received, BIA will communicate as quickly as possible. Learn more at <https://www.bia.gov/covid-19/cares-act>.

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