



Community Relations

Support Annex

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This annex provides guidance on the Community Relations (CR) function to expedite Federal, State, and local governments' ability to help citizens and communities recover from the effects of a major disaster. The CR function deploys field officers into affected communities after a major disaster to gather and disseminate information about the disaster response and recovery process. CR serves as a direct link to these communities and works in close coordination with other program elements to develop and deliver messages related to the availability of Federal disaster assistance.

B. Scope

This annex discusses the policies, responsibilities, and concept of operations for the CR element in a potential, imminent, or federally declared disaster.

II. Policies

- A. The CR function is responsible for assessing and documenting the social, political, and cultural aspects of a disaster area that might affect the disaster response and recovery effort.
- B. The CR function is designed to ensure that the citizens of disaster-affected communities are aware of available Federal disaster assistance programs and how to access them.

III. Planning Assumptions

- A. CR management and field officers will deploy simultaneously with other initial disaster response elements as warranted by the situation.
- B. Up-to-date resource databases will be available to provide established contacts, relationships, and rosters of local government officials and appropriate community groups and organizations.
- C. Current, accurate, and accessible geographic and demographic databases are readily available.
- D. CR will coordinate with all elements of the Emergency Response Team (ERT) to ensure that information disseminated in the field is timely and consistent.

IV. Concept of Operations

A. General

1. Preparation by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regional staff for an anticipated or actual event will include coordinating with the affected State(s), collecting relevant information on the situation, alerting required staff, and deploying CR personnel to, or near, the affected area.
2. In coordination with other staff elements, an initial Community Relations Plan, with disaster-specific guidance and objectives, will be prepared jointly by the CR Coordinator and the appropriate State official at the beginning of each disaster operation.
3. The CR function will be performed jointly by the Federal and State personnel, when available, working to achieve the objectives specified in the Community Relations Plan. Field teams will be organized and dispersed throughout the affected area. They will include trained Federal, State, and, if necessary, locally hired persons who know the community. The cultural, racial, and ethnic makeup of the affected population (including languages spoken) will be taken into consideration to the extent possible when making field team assignments.
4. The CR element coordinates closely with the affected State(s) to identify community leaders (e.g., grassroots, political, religious, educational, business, labor, ethnic) and neighborhood advocacy groups to assist in the rapid dissemination of information, identify unmet needs, establish an ongoing dialogue and information exchange, and facilitate collaborative Federal, State, and local planning and mutual support for disaster recovery.

B. Organization

Community Relations is a staff element of the ERT. The CR Coordinator reports directly to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO). A functional organization chart is shown in **Figure CR-1**. Major CR functions can be expanded or streamlined to meet the needs of the disaster.

1. CR Operations

The CR Operations element is responsible for organizing and managing the CR field component, which interfaces with local governments, community organizations, and disaster victims. The field component may be divided into geographic areas and sectors, depending on the size and nature of the disaster.

Area Managers are assigned to disasters that affect a large geographic area and/or have a large number of sector teams. Area Managers assist in the supervision of sector teams to maintain an appropriate management span of control and enhance day-to-day communications. Each CR sector will have an assigned Sector Manager who reports to the Field Operations Chief or Area Manager as appropriate. An appropriate number of field officers are assigned to each sector.

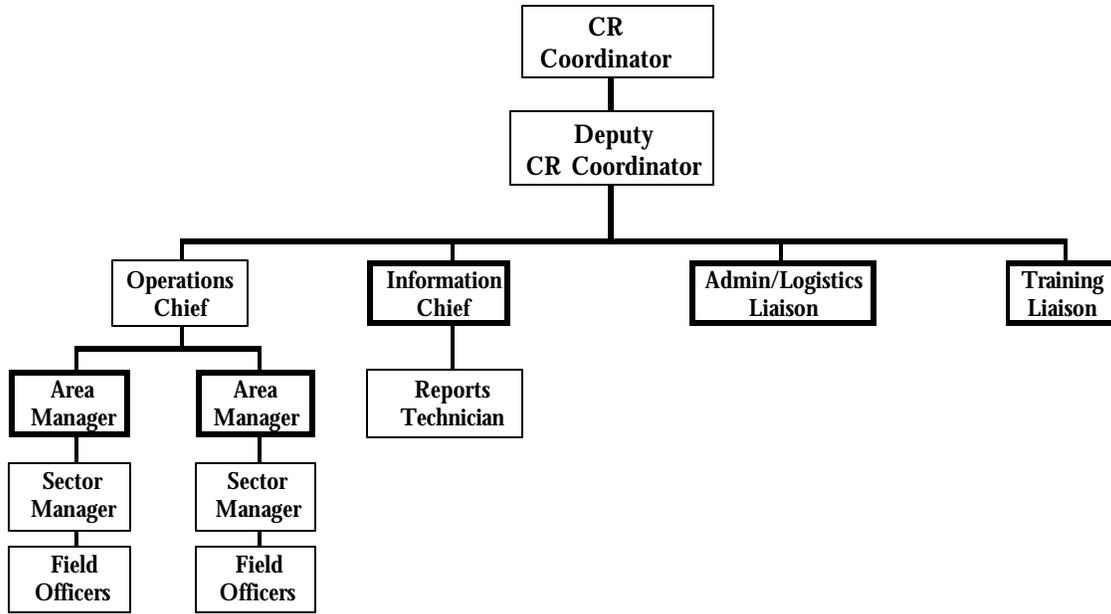


Figure CR-1 — ERT CR Structure
(Positions in boxes with heavier lines are activated only during large-scale disasters.)

2. CR Support

Depending on the size and nature of a disaster, the CR function may include an Information element, an Administrative/Logistics Liaison, and/or a Training Liaison. The Information element manages the timely flow of CR information to and from the FCO, the CR field component, and other Disaster Field Office sources. The Administrative/Logistics Liaison provides short-term logistics support to field officers and coordinates the long-term administrative and personnel activities of the CR function. The Training Liaison identifies training needs and provides disaster-specific orientation and training, supported by the Disaster Field Training Office.

C. Notification

In response to an anticipated or actual regional event, CR staff will be notified, activated, and deployed through the regional CR cadre manager. Regions may request additional staff through FEMA Headquarters at any time. Staff from other FEMA regions and Headquarters may be used to augment regional CR operations in large disasters as needed.

D. Response Actions

The number of CR field officers and extent of involvement throughout disaster response and recovery operations will be governed by the CR Plan and any subsequent amendments. Specific activities and responsibilities of CR field officers will be in accordance with procedures and guidance contained in the CR Operations Manual and CR Field Operations Guide.

V. Responsibilities

A. Primary Agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency

1. In conjunction with the disaster-affected State, ensure an efficient and reliable flow of disaster-related information between victims and public and private organizations that provide assistance;
2. Supply the CR function with a staff of trained personnel;
3. Ensure that the CR function promotes equal access to disaster assistance consistent with the Stafford Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; and
4. Establish and adhere to standardized procedures that provide for a consistent level of CR services to disaster victims.

B. Support Agencies

1. Department of Justice, Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice, through a FEMA mission assignment, can provide conciliation and mediation training and technical assistance in matters of race, color, or national origin; conflict resolution; problem solving; cultural awareness; and community tension assessments.

2. Corporation for National Service

The Corporation for National Service (CNS) is responsible for providing assistance to States and collaborating agencies to perform specific functions for disadvantaged or special-needs disaster victims. CNS, through a memorandum of understanding with FEMA, can be provided a FEMA mission assignment to support the CR function. CNS can provide teams of trained personnel to be strategically placed in areas of heaviest need to assist the elderly, the physically or mentally disabled, and low-income populations. CNS includes AmeriCorps USA, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), National Civilian Community Group, and Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

VI. References

- A. Community Relations Operations Manual.
- B. Community Relations Field Operations Guide.