

MEMO

TO: Jim Hill, PLAN

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RE: Recovery Planning Recommendations for PLAN cities

When a natural or man-made disaster impacts a community, emergency response procedures are immediately put into place to ensure the safety of the community. If the disaster is significant enough that a community may seek outside support, disaster recovery procedures will also need to be immediately activated. These procedures are designed to document and recover as much of the costs of response and recovery as possible while also providing an opportunity to build the community back stronger and better than before.

The cost recovery process begins with a local proclamation of an emergency. This is followed by an Initial Damage Estimate (IDE) performed by the local government to identify the rough extent of the damage. The IDE must be completed before requesting state or federal assistance. The IDE helps CalOES prioritize its efforts to develop a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA), which in turn can lead to a state or federal disaster declaration if certain damage thresholds are met. In local events like the recent South Napa Earthquake, CalOES staff had sufficient staff to aid the affected jurisdictions; in larger events, it will be important that local jurisdictions understand how to proceed through the state and federal public assistance process. If local jurisdictions are unfamiliar with the process and what projects are eligible for reimbursement, they will leave money on the table for what they've done to respond and will miss finance opportunities to recover more effectively.

Train a local recovery team

Because these actions need to be taken very quickly while emergency responders may still be responding to the disaster, it is important that a separate team of local officials immediately begins the process of documenting damage as well as documenting expenses for possible federal reimbursement. Risk Managers, Finance and Public Works directors may be best suited for this effort because of their experience with project cost tracking and financial analysis. Staff appointed to manage the recovery process should attend California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) Disaster Recovery Training <http://www.calema.ca.gov/csti/pages/course-catalog.aspx>. The training is offered free of cost to government agencies. The next training is being offered **March 10-12 at Alameda County EOC.**

Retain a cost recovery consultant

The process of obtaining public assistance and seeking reimbursement for costs is very detailed and constantly changing. Few communities have had enough disasters to be fully competent and up to date on cost recovery procedures. A professional who regularly works in disaster cost recovery can provide guidance and advice on best practice. Before a disaster they can ensure that all the proper procedures are in place. After a disaster they can help prepare appropriate documents for making a disaster declaration, requesting appropriate assistance,

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documenting costs and expenses for reimbursement later, and void future audits by FEMA. PLAN could add qualified cost recovery consultants to its recommended vendor list for use by its members. Communities that have staff experienced in cost recovery can also provide post-disaster mutual aid assistance to local governments. These costs are reimbursable through FEMA's Public Assistance program.

Adopt Recovery Ordinance

Beyond cost recovery, long-term community recovery requires decisions about how and where to rebuild that can stress a community wanting to restore the life they had as quickly as possible. While specific recovery actions cannot be known or implemented until after a disaster, there are many actions that can be taken before a disaster to that assist and expedite recovery. Local governments should adopt a recovery and reconstruction ordinance following the American Planning Association model before a disaster (<https://www.planning.org/research/postdisaster/pdf/modelrecoveryordinance.pdf>). The ordinance should make decisions about several key decisions that will emerge following a disaster, including governance structure for how recovery decisions will be made and by whom, debris removal, issuing building permits and deciding whether or not to waive certain requirements, determining whether existing planning documents will be sufficient to guide rebuilding and recovery, or whether new documents will be needed to establish new goals and intentions.