

Central Office Disaster Food Assistance Checklist

When it's becoming obvious that a disaster will be officially declared

<u>Communication</u>	Agency, Contact Name, Phone and Email Address
<p>Frequent and ongoing communication with all impacted parties is critical.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> The MPRO FNS office _____
<p>It's important to have all contact information completed before the official disaster declaration.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> The Iowa FNS field office _____
<p>Creating an email disaster distribution list is a good idea. That way no one will ever be accidentally left out of the loop on critical discussions and information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor's office _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> IMAs and field staff _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> DIA _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Press (via the DHS spokesman) _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> IA Homeland Security and Emergency Management Coordinator _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Retailers when Hot Food Waiver implemented _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other potentially impacted federal agencies _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal and state legislators _____

When it's becoming obvious that a disaster has occurred that may require government help

<p><u>Communication</u> Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management</p>	<p>Tell the IA HSEM Coordinator that the DHS Disaster Coordinator needs to be advised immediately when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor declares an official disaster. • A Presidential disaster declaration for Individual Assistance is requested by Iowa. • Any subsequent counties are declared for Individual Assistance.
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When it's becoming obvious that a disaster has been or will be officially declared

<p><u>Communication</u> Websites to monitor</p>	<p>Governor's Website--Press Releases Updated daily with press releases from the Governor's office. When new counties are added to the state's disaster program, they will be listed here. Once the presidential declaration has been approved, there's no need to follow new counties listed here. The FEMA site will be the appropriate guide at that point.</p> <p>FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency Updated at least daily. Will show what counties have been approved for Individual Assistance which is a requirement to run the D-FAP program. New counties can be added frequently if a disaster progresses. Once a presidential declaration has been approved for Iowa, it's a fast and easy process to get more counties added.</p> <p>Disaster Food Stamp Program Guidance D-FAP Federal Regulations. Also reference the formal guidance received via email once D-FAP is approved.</p>
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When it's becoming obvious that a disaster will be officially declared

<p><u>FNS</u></p>	<p>Once FNS sees that a disaster is occurring in the state, they may contact DHS to find out if we are considering implementing the D-FAP. Until the presidential disaster declaration has been approved, DHS may not even be certain about requesting to start the program.</p> <p>Informal conversations about possible waivers and length of program can begin before the program is officially requested by DHS. FNS often provides suggestions and guidance as to what waivers and formal requests DHS should make.</p> <p>Once the decision has been made to request to start D-FAP, make a formal request to MPRO in writing. Scan and email the signed request. Be sure to attach the list of federally required information.</p> <p>Both the federal regulations and the guidance received from FNS concerning the specific disaster must be followed.</p> <p>FNS may send in-person representatives to review procedures and visit field offices. It is possible they will request for DHS to change protocol or procedures while they are on-site during the disaster.</p> <p>Reporting to FNS is a daily occurrence. A final report is required with the due date being in either the guidance or federal regulations.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Waivers</u></p> <p>Waivers to consider</p>	<p>Contact MPRO by phone to informally discuss possible waivers to request. Try to give as many details as known at the time of the informal request. They will supply feedback and make suggestions. Years that specific waivers were actually implemented in () after name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Extension of recertification waiver (2008)</i> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensures households affected by disaster don't lose benefits ➤ Allows staff to focus on providing disaster benefits ➤ Minimizes long-term impact on caseload ➤ Delays work until a later date, which means double workload when the delayed reviews come due • <i>Recertification waived</i> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensures households affected by a disaster won't lose benefits ➤ Allows staff to focus on providing disaster benefits ➤ Doesn't double-up work <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cases will stay active for the waived period of time increasing the possibility of dollar errors • <i>Hot foods waiver (2008 and 2010)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allows households to purchase hot, prepared foods at authorized retailers ➤ Particularly helpful to households that have been displaced due to a disaster • <i>Spoiled food waiver (2008 and 2010)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This waiver is to increase the normal 10 days allowed to report spoiled food. The extension varies by disaster and no two waivers are the same. FNS will often approve a different timeframe than originally requested.
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Training</u></p>	<p>Update state-wide training materials located in the disaster folder. This includes PowerPoints, handouts, fraud posters, etc.</p> <p>Depending on the timing of the disaster a good outlet for training is the IM monthly conference call. Any training can be recorded to be viewed later by those who missed the training or as a refresher as the disaster continues. If any updates negate the training, remove the recorded presentations and update the materials.</p> <p>Utilize SPIRS announcements as a means to communicate important information quickly.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>EBT/EPPIC</u></p>	<p><u>Questions to ask ourselves concerning the EBT vault cards:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have enough EBT vault cards on hand? • Is the EBT vault card security plan ready? • Is the inventory list ready to deploy? • How will vault cards be deployed to the field? <p>Once a disaster has been officially declared/D-FAP approved</p> <p><u>Central office:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SuperUsers need to enter each individual disaster period into EPPIC • SuperUsers need to add any central office staff volunteering to go to the local offices, if distributing EBT cards <p><u>Information we need from the IMAs/field offices:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many EBT cards will they need for their service area • Names of workers who will be making disaster EPPIC entries for their service area • Names of workers who will be distributing the EBT cards for their service area
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Field Support</u></p> <p>The central office role in a disaster is often the front-end work, before the disaster period begins.</p> <p>Providing ongoing support to the field is imperative for the disaster to be run as smoothly as possible.</p> <p>Being accessible, including after hours, will allow the field to be as efficient as possible.</p>	<p>Dialogue with the IMAs should be early on in the process. Let them know when implementation of the D-FAP is being considered.</p> <p>Direct them to the <i>Field Disaster Food Assistance Checklist</i>. Begin identifying needs and resources to prepare their service area for the deployment of the disaster program. Assist them in any way possible.</p> <p><u>Important discussion points:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing their offices and staff for D-FAP • EBT/EPPIC guidelines • Fraud control/DIA • FEMA/DRCs • Staffing • Training and training materials • Central office contacts for the field • Publicity
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<p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>Daily Updates</p> <p>Communication is the key to a successful disaster program.</p>	<p>It's good practice to have a daily conference call between central office and the IMAs. Set up a recurring meeting for the duration of the disaster, ideally at the same time every day.</p> <p>This is a good time to discuss any updates and guidance received from FNS, discuss issues in the field, clarify questions and request DIA presence.</p> <p>Central office staff should include the bureau chief, Food Assistance program managers and EBT program planners/systems.</p>
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<p><u>DIA</u></p> <p>Contact with DIA should be early and often. Keeping them updated as information comes in will help us greatly in the disaster response.</p>	<p>DIA presence at local offices and DRC's are an important piece of the disaster response. They should be included in any field training that is provided so they have a good understanding of what will be happening at each office.</p> <p>The DIA disaster protocol should be updated and reviewed for each disaster. It's important that DIA and DHS are on the same page with expectations for both agencies. The protocol's main objective is for DHS to maintain overall direction of the response in the field, with help from DIA. The final decision on an applicant's disaster benefits lies with DHS. The suggestion from DIA is simply that, a suggestion.</p> <p>DIA presence on-site during disaster response greatly diminishes the likelihood of fraud. Having investigators on-site full-time in larger, urban areas is a good idea.</p> <p>Smaller, less affected counties can often afford to either have part-time DIA presence or have them 'on call' for possible fraud. If an office doesn't have DIA and fraud is suspected, pend the case and call DIA immediately. They will have an investigator to the office for a home visit/interview within 24 hours. This does allow flexibility for the investigators to manage more area, efficiently.</p> <p>Good communication between the field, central office and DIA will allow for proper DIA coverage for all areas. If the field is experiencing an influx in one county office where there are no investigators, the IMA should contact central office to request DIA move an agent to that office. Quantity of applicants can vary greatly from the morning to afternoon in any office at any time. DIA is flexible enough to move their agents to the most populated offices daily. The IMAs need to monitor the need for DIA presence frequently.</p>
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When the disaster period is over

<p><u>Wrap-up and Lessons Learned</u></p>	<p>Within a week of the completion of the disaster period, have a final wrap-up meeting while the happenings of the disaster are still fresh in everyone's minds. Include IMAs, any integral field staff, central office and DIA.</p> <p>Have all parties submit suggestions for improvements and better processes. Compile the list and distribute prior to the meeting. Take time to work through all ideas. What worked and what didn't.</p> <p>Central office staff should have a few more meetings every two weeks or so to finish up changes that need to be implemented for the next disaster. Updating forms, re-writing procedures and checklists, going over final FNS reports, etc.</p>
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