# PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

An emergency management program examines potential emergencies and disasters based on the risks posed by likely hazards; develops and implements programs aimed toward reducing the impact of these events on the community, prepares for those risks that cannot be eliminated; and prescribes the actions required to deal with the consequences of actual events and to recover from those events.
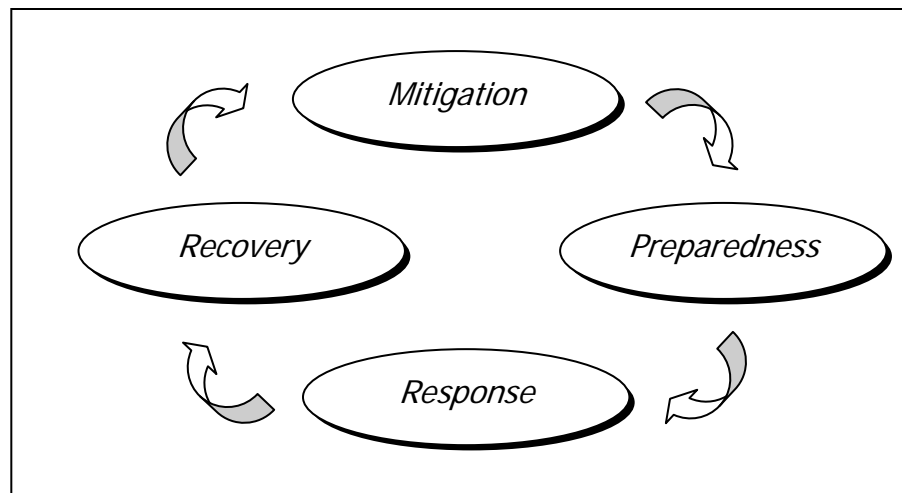
Emergency activities are divided into four phases that form a cycle. The phases of the cycle are:

1. Mitigation—<u>**Taking sustained actions to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects.**</u>

As the costs of disasters continue to rise, it is necessary to take sustained action to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects. These sustained actions are also known as mitigation.

Mitigation is the initial phase of emergency management and should be considered before a disaster or emergency occurs. Mitigation, however, should also be a continuing activity that is integrated with each of the other phases of emergency management to employ a long-range, community-based approach to mitigation.

The goals of mitigation activities are to:

· Protect people and structures.

· Reduce the costs of response and recovery.

Mitigation is accomplished in conjunction with a hazard analysis, which helps to identify:

· What events can occur in and around the community.

· The likelihood that an event will occur.

· The consequences of the event in terms of casualties, destruction, disruption to critical services, and costs of recovery.

To be successful, mitigation measures must be developed into an overall mitigation strategy that considers ways to reduce hazard losses together with the overall risk from specific hazards and other community goals.

Mitigation measures can be developed and implemented at the local or State level.

2. Preparedness—<u>Building the emergency management function to respond effectively to, and recover from, any hazard.</u>

Because it is not possible to mitigate completely against every hazard that poses a risk, preparedness measures can help to reduce the impact of the remaining hazards by taking certain actions before an emergency event occurs. Preparedness includes plans or other preparations made to save lives and facilitate response and recovery operations.

Preparedness measures involve all of the players in the integrated emergency management system—local, State, and Federal agencies and citizens—and, at the local level, may include activities, such as:

· Developing an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that addresses identified hazards, risks, and response measures.

· Recruiting, assigning, and training staff who can assist in key areas of response operations.

· Identifying resources and supplies that may be required in an emergency.

· Designating facilities for emergency use.

3. Response—<u>Conducting emergency operations to save lives and property by taking action to reduce the hazard to acceptable levels (or eliminate it entirely); evacuating potential victims; providing food, water, shelter, and medical care to those in need; and restoring critical public services.</u>

Response begins when an emergency event is imminent or immediately after an event occurs. Response encompasses all activities taken to save lives and reduce damage from the event and includes:

· Providing emergency assistance to victims.

· Restoring critical infrastructure (e.g., utilities).

· Ensuring continuity of critical services (e.g., law enforcement, public works).

In other words, response involves putting preparedness plans into action.

One of the first response tasks is to conduct a situation assessment. Local government is responsible for emergency response and for continued assessment of its ability to protect its citizens and the property within the community. To fulfill this responsibility, responders and local government officials must conduct an immediate rapid assessment of the local situation.

Rapid assessment includes all immediate response activities that are directly linked to determining initial lifesaving and life-sustaining needs and to identifying imminent hazards. The ability of local governments to perform a rapid assessment within the first few hours after an event is crucial to providing an adequate response for life-threatening situations and imminent hazards. Coordinated and timely assessments enable local government to:

· Prioritize response activities.

· Allocate scarce resources.

· Request additional assistance from mutual aid partners, as well as the State, quickly and accurately.

· Obtaining accurate information quickly through rapid assessment is key to initiating response activities and needs to be collected in an organized fashion. Critical information, also called essential elements of information (EEI), includes information about:

· Lifesaving needs, such as evacuation and search and rescue.

· The status of critical infrastructure, such as transportation, utilities, communication systems, and fuel and water supplies.

· The status of critical facilities, such as police and fire stations, medical providers, water and sewage treatment facilities, and media outlets.

· The risk of damage to the community (e.g., dams and levees, facilities producing or storing hazardous materials) from imminent hazards.

· The number of citizens who have been displaced as a result of the event and the estimated extent of damage to their dwellings.

Essential elements of information also include information about the potential for cascading events. Cascading events are events that occur as a direct or indirect result of an initial event. For example, if a flash flood disrupts electricity to an area and, as a result of the electrical failure, a serious traffic accident involving a hazardous materials spill occurs, the traffic accident is a cascading event. If, as a result of the hazardous materials spill, a neighborhood must be evacuated and a local stream is contaminated, these are also cascading events. Taken together, the effect of cascading events can be crippling to a community.

Good planning, training, and exercising before an event occurs can help reduce cascading events and their effects. Maintaining the discipline to follow the plan during response operations also reduces the effects of cascading events.

4. Recovery—**<u>Rebuilding communities so that individuals, businesses, and governments can function on their own, return to normal life, and protect against future hazards.</u>**

The goal of recovery is to return the community's systems and activities to normal. Recovery begins right after the emergency. Some recovery activities may be concurrent with response efforts. Long-term recovery includes restoring economic activity and rebuilding community facilities and housing. Long-term recovery (stabilizing all systems) can sometimes take years.

Although recovery is primarily a responsibility of local government, if the emergency or disaster received a Presidential Declaration, a number of assistance programs may be available under the Stafford Act. Some types of Federal assistance include:

· Infrastructure such as non-Federal roads, public buildings, and bridges can be repaired or replaced.

· Mitigation measures can be implemented.

· Grants may be available to individuals and families for temporary housing, repairs, replacement of possessions, and medical and funeral expenses.

· The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides loans to individuals and businesses.

· Crisis counseling may be available for victims and responders.

· Legal services can be provided.

· Disaster unemployment benefits may be provided.

Recovery from disaster is unique to each community depending on the amount and kind of damage caused by the disaster and the resources that the community has ready or can get. In the short term, recovery is an extension of the response phase in which basic services and functions are restored. In the long term, recovery is a restoration of both the personal lives of individuals and the livelihood of the community.

After the short term recovery when roads have been opened, debris removed, supplies and shelters secured, communication channels, water and power, life safety and other basic services restored, the community and its leadership must rebuild.

Once the early stage of recovery has brought the community back to a safe and operational level of functioning, the long term state can build on that.

Long term recovery may take several months or even extend into years because it is a complex process of revitalizing not just homes but also businesses, public infrastructure, and the community's economy and quality of life.

There are many long term leadership and planning considerations. Applying for assistance programs available from the Federal government, as mentioned previously, is important to consider for obtaining financial and other resources in the case of a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Other considerations include:

· Keeping citizens informed and preventing unrealistic expectations.

· Mitigation measures to ensure against future disaster damage.

Following the emergency, we learn how to mitigate, prepare, and respond better. As we revise our efforts, the cycle repeats.

Courtesy of the Federal Emergency Management Agency