

Summary Report: Integrated Disaster Resilience - Key Recommendations

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The Challenge

Natural disasters are intensifying, demanding a more effective national response. Current efforts by FEMA, the National Guard, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are vital but often fragmented, leading to inefficiencies and delays. A critical barrier to long-term resilience is local political interference and "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) opposition to essential hazard mitigation projects like dams and resilient infrastructure.

The Solution: Deep Integration

We propose a deeply integrated model to maximize the strengths of FEMA, the National Guard, and USACE, and to overcome bureaucratic and political hurdles.

Key Recommendations:

1. Permanent Secondments:

- **National Guard to FEMA:** Embed National Guard logisticians, communicators, and planners within FEMA to optimize resource flow, integrate military assets, and co-develop disaster plans.
- **USACE to FEMA:** Embed USACE civil engineers, hydrologists, and environmental specialists within FEMA's mitigation divisions to design resilient infrastructure and guide communities.
- **FEMA to USACE:** Embed FEMA risk assessment and community engagement experts within USACE to ensure projects are technically sound and effectively communicated to local populations, reducing NIMBYism.

2. Call-Up Roles for Crisis Response:

- **Integrated Rapid Assessment Teams:** Create joint FEMA-National Guard-USACE teams for immediate post-disaster assessment of critical infrastructure (bridges, dams, roads).
- **Specialized Skill Pools:** Pre-train and identify National Guard and USACE personnel with unique skills (e.g., swift water rescue, heavy equipment) for direct integration into FEMA-led operations.

3. Streamlining & Accountability:

- **Unified Project Review:** Implement a "one-stop shop" for major infrastructure and mitigation projects, co-led by FEMA and USACE, to cut red tape.
- **Flexible Funding:** Advocate for legislative changes to allow pooling of funds from FEMA, USACE, and other federal agencies for comprehensive, resilient infrastructure projects, overcoming "siloed funding."
- **Joint Oversight:** Establish inter-agency boards for significant projects to ensure proper financial management and achievement of goals.
- **Accurate Hazard Mapping:** Mandate FEMA and USACE to be the definitive, non-politically influenced authority for flood plain mapping to prevent manipulation and ensure safe development.

Impact

This integrated approach will lead to:

- **Faster, More Effective Response:** Streamlined operations and pre-planned integration.
- **Enhanced Long-Term Resilience:** Proactive hazard mitigation, especially for flood-prone areas, by leveraging USACE's engineering prowess.
- **Overcoming Local Obstacles:** USACE's impartial, science-based authority and federal funding leverage can help bypass local political interference and NIMBY sentiments.
- **Greater Accountability:** Transparent tracking of resources and shared performance metrics across agencies.

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