# Emergency Management

## Introduction

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit Florida as well as the Gulf Coast States, resulting in numerous casualties and loss of properties. The disaster left a mark in the lives of individuals because of the disruption of families, loss of lives and properties, compelling Americans to rethink risk assumptions and vulnerability. In addition to these effects, the hurricane served as a catalyst for crucial alterations in the federal policy as well as the organization of various federal entities, particularly pertaining to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Most of these alterations were included in the DHS appropriation legislation of 2007, such as the Katrina Emergency Act popularly (Post-Katrina Act of 2006) that formulated new leadership positions as well as position requirements inside Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The policy brought novel missions into FEMA by reinstating some previously removed sections and improving the agency’s authority, such as instructing the administrators to carry out a wide range of activities prior and subsequent to disasters. The Post Katrina Act includes provisions that lay out new law, alter Homeland Security Act as well as modify the Stafford Act.

## Stafford Act

According to Francis McCarthy and Library of Congress (2011), the enactment of the Stafford Act was designed to influence orderly and systematic changes to the management of federal natural disaster assistances. The Act permits federal assistance for local and state governments, particularly non-profit organizations, individuals and/or families after local and state governments are besieged by natural fires and disasters, explosions or floods, regardless of cause. The statute provides the president with the discretion to give a key emergency or disaster declaration in reply to a gubernatorial request for help. Only the President can issue a key disaster declaration. FEMA, in conjunction with support offered by other local agencies, may offer other types of assistance depending on the nature of the disaster and the needs of the affected community (United States 2009).

The Post Katrina Act, alongside other laws enacted by the Congress, drastically alters the Stafford Act by expounding some parts, waving past requirements and creating or re-working new authorities. The alterations to the Act mirrors experiences attained after Katrina and the apparent need for lawful remedies to the Act programs (McCarthy & Library of Congress, 2011). The reason was to make the Act more flexible or accommodating and reactive to events of a calamitous nature. While increasing federal assistance authorities, the changes aim to maintain local, state as well as individual emergency management accountability and responsibility. The Act also seeks to increase federal disaster assistance power by leaving the fundamental principles of the Stafford Act like the Presidential discretion, restriction on eligibility and requirement for state requests unchanged (McCarthy & Library of Congress, 2011).

## How Changes Will Improve FEMA Capabilities

### Expedited Federal Assistance

The Post Katrina Act gives power to the President to support precautionary evacuation actions and the deliverance of federal emergency response. In addition to recovery aid following the President’s issuance of a key emergency or disaster declaration, the Act also assists in coming with proper plans of avoiding future experiences associated with natural disasters. The changes increase areas of advisory and technical assistance to address issues of communication and delay that were identified in Hurricane Katrina response efforts. The President may offer federal help in the absence of particular request from state officials. If unsolicited federal assistance is offered, federal assistance ought to try to coordinate the deliverance of such aid with officials from the state, but they must not holdup the delivery of required aid due to the coordination efforts.

### Aid to Individuals

The Post Katrina Act tackles numerous guidelines that direct national disaster assistance to families and individuals on special circumstances or special needs in the disaster setting. For instance, the Act offers authority for the giving of assistance to people living with disability by incorporating the meaning of “individual with disability” from country’s 1990 disability Act in the Stafford Act. The statute also states that durable medical gear required by individuals who are disabled, is a qualified form of vital assistance. The statute also needs that the FEMA overseer must develop course of action within ninety days of enactment with regard to accommodation of disabled individuals to emergency equipment and facilities (Haddow, Bullock & Coppola, 2014).

The Post Katrina Act also tackles issues about federal assistance to people belonging to these population classes – those with limited Language proficiency (English Proficiency) and those disabled to the discrimination provisions found in Strafford Act. A connected section of the Act changes the Stafford Act by instructing FEMA to work with local and state governments to identify individuals with disabilities and groups with restricted English proficiency. FEMA’s director ought to make sure that information is made widely obtainable to such groups prior to and during the disasters, and should develop and maintain best practices for local and state governments that work with these people (Abbott, Hetzel & American Bar Association, 2005).

The act authorizes new types of help for those individuals that are affected negatively by major disasters. The President is given authority to offer transportation help to individuals displaced from their place of residence because of major emergency or disaster, including those required to move amongst substitute provisional shelters or return to their original places of residence. The President is also given the mandate to offer case management services to qualified private, state or local organizations that offer specified actions to re-unite alienated families and assist agencies in finding missing family members. These alterations to the Stafford Act will lead to improved response support capabilities and enhance FEMA’s delivery mechanisms for assistance (Abbott, Hetzel & American Bar Association, 2005).

## Conclusion

The introduction of the FEMA provisions was to change the tactic and face of disaster management after the Hurricane Katrina disaster. The Act comprised of making drastic changes that would empower the president to make declarations towards assisting and alleviating victims of the disasters in the future. The enactment of the Stafford Act was to influence a new way of orderly and systematic changes of attending to emergencies. In this regard, the federal government is to offer natural disaster assistance to state and local authorities in carrying out their roles to help citizens. One of the significant changes in in which the Act could improve FEMA’s capabilities was the authorization by the president to allow the federal government offer financial and physical assistance. The Act was also essential for the coordination of the government-wide relief efforts, including the evacuation of victims from the hit areas, offering relief food, medical assistance and other contributions. This was a coordinated effort undertaken by non-governmental agencies, individuals or state organizations.

## References

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