

# Public Assistance Initial Damage Assessments

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The purpose of this checklist is to identify essential elements of information during an Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) that are valuable in supporting virtual Joint PDAs. In some cases, FEMA Regions may choose to virtually assess Public Assistance (PA) damages, supported as necessary with a hybrid approach to assess damages that cannot be validated virtually. FEMA Regions decide whether the assessments will be virtual, or hybrid with a limited field presence based on incident specific factors.

## Requesting a Joint PDA

If the incident is of such severity and magnitude that resources needed to recover are expected to exceed state, tribal, or territorial (STT) government capability, the director of STT emergency management agencies may request a joint PDA. The joint PDA request is accomplished through a joint PDA request letter to the appropriate FEMA regional office, which should contain a list of disaster-impacted locations and a basic PDA schedule. STT governments can lessen the time required for FEMA to virtually verify damage by working with local emergency managers to assess whether the IDA information submitted is complete and aligned with established FEMA programmatic eligibility standards.

- **Essential Documentation Information** – inventory of damaged facilities including facility description, category of damage, method of repair, etc. (see additional supporting factors below)
- **Summary of Facility Impacts** – disaster-related information that should illustrate the overall impacts upon the facility and the unique resources of the Federal Government that are necessary to support repair efforts
- **Damage Photographs** – visual evidence provided along with the summary of facility impacts and damage reports to confirm damage assessments

## Essential Documentation Information

The following information should be provided for damaged facilities. Damage description and dimensions must clearly separate the dimensions and description of the facility from those of the intended repairs. Dimensions and descriptions of completed work must also be reported separately. Refer to Appendix J of the [PDA Guide](#) for the Public Assistance Eligibility Matrix.

## Collecting Information for a PA Assessment

Capture and document as many damage sites as possible, regardless of whether the damage site is thought to be eligible or ineligible for federal disaster assistance. Regional PA leadership will review the validated PDA information



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submitted by the STT government to make an eligibility determination and recommendation for federal disaster assistance.

## Facility Description for Every Site

This information is used to understand what the original facility looked like.

- Facility type.
- Facility name.
- Facility description (purpose and use).
- GPS coordinates (include start and end for facilities or damage longer than 200 ft).
- Year built.
- Dimensions: type, measure, and units (e.g., width 10 ft x length 40 ft x depth 5 ft).
- Capacity/volume/quantity/number and units (e.g., two lanes, 500 yd<sup>3</sup>, 6,000 ft<sup>2</sup>).
- Materials.
- Make/model/type.

## Facility Damage Description

Confirm damages were caused by the incident and occurred during the incident period.

- Start and end dates of incident period.
- Date damaged.
- Description of the cause of damage.

## Component Description and Damage

Include for each damaged component to explain what the damage looked like.

- Component type (e.g., wall and pavement).
- Component location.
- Dimension, material, and capacity of the original component.
- Dimensions of the damage.
- Make/model/type.
- Capacity/volume/quantity/number/units.

## Documentation

- Notation of facility street address.
- Sketch of facility and damage.
- Photographs of whole area.
- Photographs of damage from many (three plus) angles.
- Closeup photographs of each component.
- Photographs of all rot, crumbling, cracks, or other wear.
- Map of the facility with damage annotated.
- Map or Google Earth screenshots of the surrounding area with the facility and damage annotated.

## Method of Repair for Each Damage Inventory Item

- Who performed/will perform the work?
- Change of material from original design?
- Change in size/footprint?
- Description of how the cost of repair was derived.
- Other work/repair comments (If planning to change the design, size, or capacity, please provide plans and explain why)
- Are there Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) issues associated with the proposed scope of work? Explain.

## Summary of Facility Impacts

A narrative describing how the costs of each project were derived is important and will give context to the estimates provided. The list below denotes other documentation that is typically required for FEMA to validate projects. A detailed list of elements of information and supporting documentation can be found in Appendix K of the [PDA Guide](#).

- A description of how the costs were derived
- Annotated maps
- Photographs
- Debris quantity calculation sheets
- Brief statements of percentage of work completed at the time of assessment
- Brief statements about whether work is force account, contract, or a combination thereof
- Insurance documentation for the damaged facility/facilities

- Make sure to include the declaration page, body policy and any exclusions, and the schedule of values.
- Is the facility in a flood zone and is there a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) for the facility?
- Labor cost summary
- Labor contracts/agreements
- Equipment cost summary
- Supply cost summary
- Contractor bids or invoices
- Any relevant datasets, GIS layers, or aerial imagery that will assist with remote validation. GIS layers that have assisted virtual PDAs in the past include:
  - Parcel layers/local data
  - Pre-disaster orthoimagery
  - Post-disaster aerial imagery of damages

## Damage Photographs

FEMA may use photographs and other data collected by state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to validate damage remotely. Remote validation can be utilized to supplement site assessments in situations when damage is inaccessible, when the work has already been completed, or when damage can be validated easily through photography.

- Take several wide-view photographs of the entire facility from multiple angles. For example, photograph road damage from both ends of the road.
- Take wide-view photographs of each component, capturing the entire component.
- Take close-up photographs of each damaged component to show details.
- For all photographs, include an item to indicate size, such as a traffic cone, tape measure, or pen.
- For all photographs, capture distinctive stationary features to indicate position, such as flags, signs, cones, desks, or trees. When taking multiple photographs, ensure reference items help a reader “stitch together” the scene.
- When taking photographs inside structures, take photographs in a panoramic style. Stand in one place and turn in a circle while taking photographs. Turn a few degrees after taking each photograph and ensure the edges of photographs overlap.
- Ensure lighting and perspective allow a viewer to clearly see damages.
- Include GPS coordinates and perspective (e.g., east and west) on each photograph.
- Photograph all damage indicated by the applicant, even if the damage may not be eligible for FEMA disaster assistance. Take photographs and closeups of everything that raises a concern.