

State and Local Government in Louisiana: An Overview 2012-2016 Term

CHAPTER 2 — STATE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Part M. Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

The agency responsible for emergency preparedness and homeland security is an independent agency under the office of the governor called the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). The agency is governed under R.S. 29:721 et seq., the Louisiana Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act.

GOHSEP provides leadership and support to reduce the loss of life and property to the citizens of the state through an all-hazards emergency management program of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. More detailed information regarding each area is provided on the GOHSEP website at: www.gohsep.la.gov.

Each of the state's sixty-four parishes have an emergency management program. Louisiana is divided into nine emergency management and homeland security planning districts, which GOHSEP uses in conjunction with its Regional Support Program. The map below illustrates each of the nine districts.



Region 1: Orleans, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, and Jefferson Parishes

Region 2: East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, East Feliciana, and West Feliciana Parishes

Region 3: Lafourche, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Assumption, and Terrebonne Parishes

Region 4: Lafayette, Evangeline, St. Landry, Acadia, St. Martin, Iberia, Vermilion, and St. Mary Parishes

Region 5: Beauregard, Allen, Calcasieu, Jefferson Davis, and Cameron Parishes

Region 6: Vernon, Sabine, Natchitoches, Winn, Grant, Rapides, LaSalle, Catahoula, Concordia and Avoyelles Parishes

Region 7: Caddo, Bossier, Webster, Claiborne, Bienville, Red River, and DeSoto Parishes

Region 8: Ouachita, Union, Lincoln, Jackson, Caldwell, Richland, Morehouse, Franklin, West Carroll, East Carroll, Madison, and Tensas Parishes

Region 9: Washington, St. Tammany, St. Helena, and Tangipahoa Parishes

Parish Emergency Preparedness

Each parish in the state has an Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness or Emergency Operations Center, which is responsible for homeland security and emergency preparedness in the parish. All information regarding each parish office and/or website can be found on the GOHSEP website at www.gohsep.la.gov/parishpa.aspx.

Parish Emergency Advisory Committee

Each parish in the state must have a parish emergency management advisory committee to offer advice and counsel to the parish or police jury president on homeland security and emergency management issues. The parish or police jury president may consider the advice and counsel from the committee on such matters as planning, development, prioritization, coordination, and implementation of homeland security and emergency management issues to include but not be limited to homeland security and emergency management mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, grant requests, and the expenditure of grant funds.

Declared State of Emergency

State Emergency Declaration

A disaster or emergency, or both, must be declared by executive order or proclamation of the governor if he finds a disaster or emergency has occurred or the threat thereof is imminent. The state of disaster or emergency must continue until the governor finds that the threat of danger has passed or the disaster or emergency has been dealt with to the extent that the emergency conditions no longer exist and terminates the state of disaster or emergency by executive order or proclamation, but no state of disaster or emergency may continue for longer than thirty days unless renewed by the governor.

The legislature, by petition signed by a majority of the surviving members of either house, may terminate a state of disaster or emergency at any time. This petition terminating the state of emergency or disaster may establish a period during which no other declaration of emergency or disaster may be issued. Thereupon, the governor shall issue an executive order or proclamation ending the state of disaster or emergency.

Unified Command

GOHSEP operates under the Unified Command structure during activation for all major disasters. Unified Command is a team effort process, allowing all agencies with responsibility for an incident, either geographical or functional, to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility or accountability. The governor serves as the Unified Commander. The Deputy Unified Commander is the GOHSEP director. The Unified Command Group consists of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development, the Superintendent of State Police, the Adjutant General, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Secretary of Social Services, the Secretary of Public Safety, the Commissioner of Administration, the Secretary of Health and Hospitals, the Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Secretary of Environmental Quality, the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Public Service Commission, the Attorney General, and the Governor's Oil Spill Coordinator. The legislature also participates in the Unified Command through the House and Senate legislative liaisons.

WebEOC

The WebEOC is a web-based information management system that provides a single access point for the collection and dissemination of emergency or event-related information. During a declared emergency or event, all requests for resources must be input into the WebEOC through each parish's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness or Emergency Operations Center. The request will then be routed to the appropriate state or federal governmental entity to provide the requested resources. This system allows GOHSEP to track all requests and resources to insure that all needs are being met on the local level and for purposes of reimbursement from the federal government.

Financing

Disaster and Emergency Funding Board

The disaster and emergency funding board is composed of the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairmen of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

The governor, with the concurrence of the disaster and emergency funding board, may make funds available by transferring and expending monies appropriated for other purposes or may borrow for a term not to exceed two years from the United States government or any other public or private source for purposes of coping with a particular disaster.

State Disaster or Emergency Relief Fund

The State Disaster or Emergency Relief Fund is administered by the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. The sources of monies deposited in the fund shall be funds from specific legislative appropriations and from donations, gifts, grants, and matching or other funds provided by regional or local governments. The monies in the fund must be used for declared disasters or emergencies or both, including use as state match requirements for the payment of claims submitted and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Grants Assistance Programs

Through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) provides annual Homeland Security grants to state and local first responders within Louisiana. GOHSEP serves as the State Administrative Agent (SAA) for federal homeland security grants, and as the primary liaison with DHS and its Office of Grants and Training (G&T).

The eligible categories for most grants include management and administration, training, planning, exercise, and equipment. The focus for Louisiana has been upon enhancing the capabilities of state and local first responders to prevent and respond to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) related incidents as detailed in the State Homeland Security Strategy.

Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)

To assist the development, maintenance, and improvement of state and local emergency management capabilities, which are key components of a comprehensive national emergency management system for disasters and emergencies that may result from natural disasters or accidental or man-caused events. By combining former program activities into the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), FEMA is providing states the flexibility to allocate funds according to risk and to address the most urgent state and local needs in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Working within the standard Federal government grant administration process, EMPG provides the support that state and local governments need to achieve measurable results in key functional areas of emergency management.

Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)

The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program is a partnership designed to assist states, local, and Indian Tribal governments in reducing or eliminating long-term risks of flood damage to repetitively flooded structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The FMA program provides assistance and grants to states and repetitive loss communities for activities that will reduce the risk of flood damage to repetitive loss structures insurable under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FMA provides grants up to 75% for both planning and projects on an annual basis.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides state and local governments with financial assistance to implement measures that will permanently reduce or eliminate future damages and losses from natural hazards through safer building practices and improving existing structures and supporting infrastructure.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant (PDM)

States are encouraged to use grants to implement a sustained pre-disaster hazard mitigation program to reduce risk to the population, the costs and disruption to individuals and businesses caused by severe property damage, and the ever-growing cost to all taxpayers of federal disaster relief efforts. The program is similar to both the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) in that there is an emphasis on "brick and mortar" mitigation projects and that state and local mitigation plans are required prior to approval of mitigation project grants. Allowable costs will be governed by 44 CFR Part 13, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments and OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments.

Public Assistance

Public assistance is that part of disaster relief through which the federal government supplements the efforts of state and local governments to return the disaster area to pre-disaster conditions. These efforts primarily address the repair and restoration of public facilities, infrastructure, or services which have been damaged or destroyed.

The grant links index and information on writing and developing a grant proposal can be found <http://gohsep.la.gov/grants.aspx>.