

Federal Roles

The president of the United States leads the federal response effort. The secretary of DHS, appointed by the president, is responsible for federal response efforts and is the principal federal official for domestic incident management. The NRF provides specific and clear definitions for federal roles and entities as follows:

- **Unified Coordination Group and Staff.** This entity provides coordination in accordance with the NIMS concept of UC.
- **Incident Management Assist Teams (IMAT).** These special interagency response teams are regionally based to provide a rapid federal response. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides initial response teams, including the Hurricane Liaison Team (HLT), Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Forces, and Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS).
- **Principal Federal Official (PFO).** The PFO is a representative of the secretary of DHS and is responsible for the coordination of domestic incidents requiring a federal response.
- **Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO).** As the focal point of coordination in the Unified Coordination Group, this officer ensures integration of federal emergency management activities for Stafford Act incidents.
- **Senior Federal Law Enforcement Official (SFLEO).** This official is appointed by the attorney general to coordinate law enforcement operations related to the incident.
- **Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander.** The JTF is designated by the US Department of Defense to command federal military activities in support of an incident.
- **Joint Field Office (JFO).** The JFO is a temporary federal facility that provides a central location for the coordination of response and recovery activities of federal, state, tribal, and local governments. The JFO is structured and operated using NIMS and ICS as a management template. The JFO does not manage on-scene activities.

National Response Doctrine

The National Response Doctrine includes five key principles that support national response operations:

1. **Engaged partnerships.** Local, state, tribal, and federal governments should plan and respond together. This form of incident coordination includes ongoing communication and shared situational awareness. Engaged partnerships begin during the preparedness phase and progress through initial recovery efforts.
2. **Tiered response.** Incidents are managed at the lowest possible level. All incidents begin locally and expand through higher levels of government as needed; only a small number of incidents progress to the federal level.
3. **Scalable, flexible, and adaptable operational capabilities.** The system has the following characteristics:
 - It is scaled up or down to meet the needs of the response effort.
 - It is a flexible, fluid system that changes with each specific incident.
 - It adapts to all hazards or types of incidents.
4. **Unity of effort through UC.** UC is a structure in which diverse agencies and disciplines share responsibilities. All major incidents, and many moderate-level incidents, require diverse agencies from overlapping jurisdictions. Coordination must be accomplished via a unified structure to ensure an effective effort. UC is especially important when military and civilian agencies share operational responsibilities.
5. **Readiness to act.** As previously described, this feature ensures a rapid and timely response.

Tip

The National Response Doctrine includes the five principles of engaged partnership; tiered response; scalable, flexible, and adaptable operations capabilities; unity through UC; and readiness to act.

National Response Structure

The NRF is a template for federal entities that supports local response actions. The National Operations Center (NOC) is the primary national hub for situational awareness and operations coordination across the federal government for incident management. It provides the secretary of DHS and other principals with information necessary to make critical national-level incident management decisions.