SUMMARY VERSION

The Family Island Disaster Emergency Plan of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

2025 Edition

DRM AUTHORITY | IDB

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Summary Version
Family Island Disaster Emergency Plan

Draft Dated September 03, 2025

Forward

List of Acronyms

BDOCS	Bahamas Department of Correctional Services
BNGIS	Bahamas National Geographic Information Services
BPL	Bahamas Power and Light
BRCS	Bahamas Red Cross Society
BTC	Bahamas Telecommunication Corporation
BUC	Bahamas Utility Company
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency
CDM	Comprehensive Disaster Management
DALA	Damage Assessment and Loss Analysis
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DWI	Disaster Welfare Information
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
ESF	Emergency Support Function
ESG	Emergency Support Group
EWS	Early Warning System
FI	Family Island
FIA	Family Island Administrator
FIDEP	Family Island Disaster Emergency Plan
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GIS	Geographic Information Services
GoBH	Government of the Bahamas
ICC	Incident Command Centre
NDCP	National Disaster Coordination Protocols
NDEC	National Disaster Emergency Council
NDEOC	National Disaster Emergency Operations Centre
NDEP	National Disaster Emergency Plan
NDRMP	National Disaster Risk Management Plan
NGCC	Non-Government Consultative Council
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PM	Prime Minister
RBDF	Royal Bahamas Defence Force
RBPF	Royal Bahamas Police Force
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATUTORY PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE FIDEP

The Family Island or Local Body Disaster Emergency Plan is a requirement of the DRM Act, 2022. It includes relevant and appropriate content of the National Disaster Emergency Plan, adapted to local needs and conditions. The requirement for a National Disaster Emergency Plan is also established in the DRM Act (s.9), which outlines the document's focus as follows:

> "The National Disaster Emergency Plan, shall establish the actions and contingency arrangements required to **manage alerts** and **disaster emergencies** in order to **safeguard life, protect property and restore normalcy** to society during the **disaster response**, **rehabilitation** and **recovery** phases and it is aimed at coordinating the technical, financial and operational capacities of a **public body** and an **Administrator**, to effectively manage alerts and disaster emergencies."

The NDEP is designed to be largely implemented at the national level and gives consideration to the complementary roles of the DRM Authority, Public Bodies and Emergency Support Function Groups. Components of the NDEP are also implemented through FIAs *or* complemented by activities and operational systems established at the local district level. The FIDEP provides further details on these activities and responsibilities and seeks to outline a response framework for Administrators, capturing the actions and contingency measures they should expect to implement in an emergency response or other disaster-related operation. The FIDEP is thus focused on the parameters surrounding the effective management of disaster alerts and emergencies at the local level.

This summary version of the FIDEP provides highlights of this key content, abbreviated and simplified for public review.

1.2 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DISASTER PLANS, PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

1.2.1 Description of Plans and Related Documents

This section gives definitions and descriptions of the different types of plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) included as part of the national disaster emergency planning system.

- **National Disaster Emergency Plan**: This plan establishes the actions and contingency arrangements required to manage alerts and disaster emergencies to safeguard life, protect property and restore normalcy to society during the disaster response, rehabilitation and recovery phases for the entire country. It is aimed at coordinating the technical, financial and operational capacities of a public body and an Administrator, to effectively manage alerts and disaster emergencies.

- **Family Island Disaster Emergency Plans:** Plans that outline the actions and contingencies required to manage local emergencies and disaster emergency events as it relates to the mandates and responsibilities of the Family Island Administrator and the local government district under their responsibility.

- **Public Body Plans**: Plans that outline the actions and contingencies required to manage local emergencies and disaster emergency events as it relates to the mandates and responsibilities of that Public Body

- **Emergency Support Function Plans or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**: Documents developed by Emergency Support Functions to guide their activities during the disaster response, rehabilitation and recovery phases. Where, based on the nature and scope of the issues being addressed by the ESF the document requires high level sign-off (for example by one or more Permanent Secretaries or Ministers), a Plan can be used. Where the document is primarily concerned with operational details and can be changed by agreement of members of the ESF, SOPs can be used.

- **Activity Specific Plans**: Plans that outline the scope and steps involved in critical disaster emergency activities that have complex, cross-sectoral components, such as mass evacuation or mass casualty response.

- **National Mass Evacuation Plan**: A strategic framework that outlines how a country will safely and efficiently relocate large numbers of people from areas threatened or impacted by disasters, emergencies, or other hazardous events.

- **Recovery Plan**: A framework that outlines how an island/constituency/local government district/public body, or other entity will restore living conditions, infrastructure, services, the economy, and the environment after a disaster. It sets priorities, timelines, and responsibilities for rehabilitation and reconstruction, ensures support for affected and vulnerable populations, and integrates measures to build resilience and reduce future disaster risks.

- **National Humanitarian Assistance Standards**: National standards that provide the minimum standard to be met by any humanitarian assistance provided by the Government, to the Government or by humanitarian aid organizations, particularly in relation to the supply of water, the promotion of sanitation and hygiene, food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement, and health.

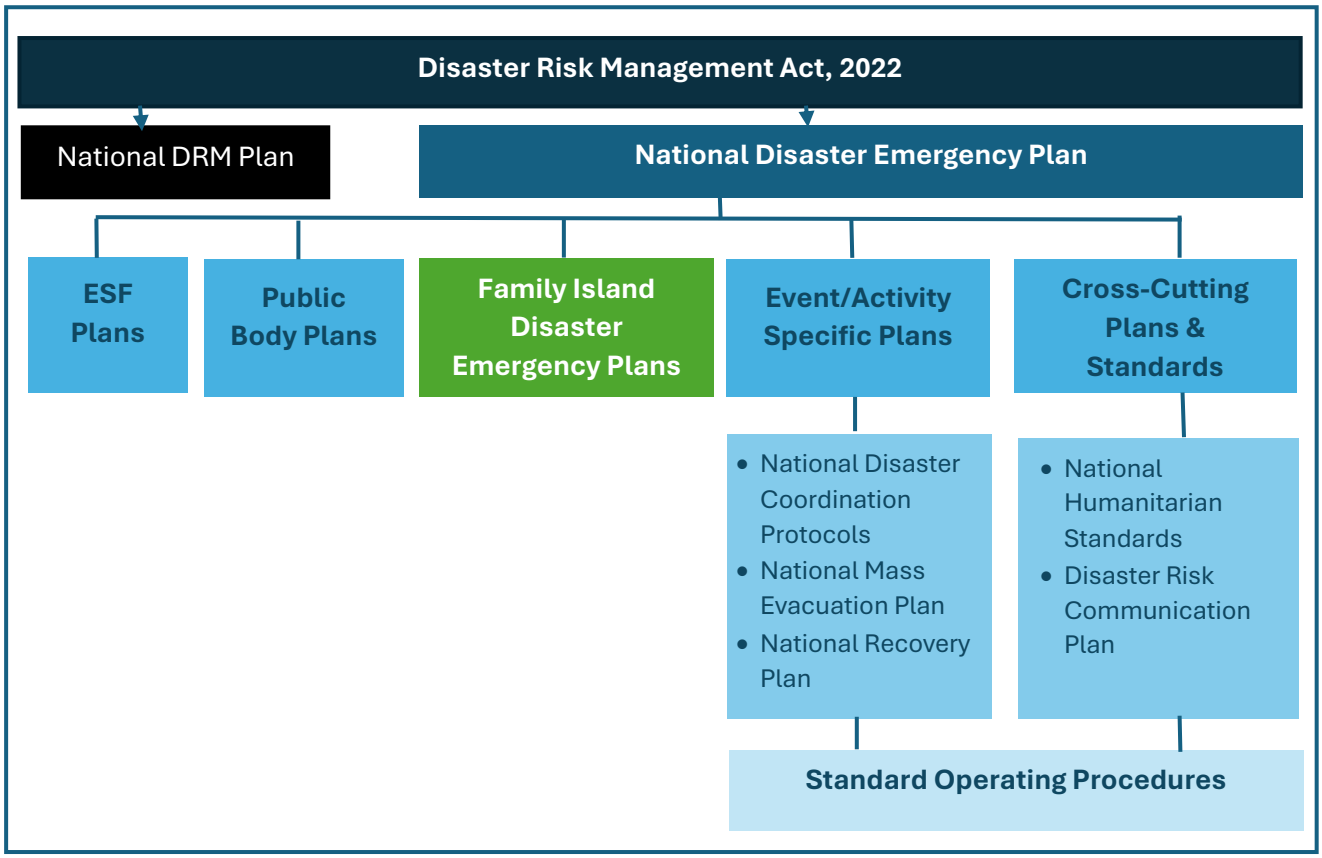
- **Disaster Risk Communication Plan**: A structured strategy for delivering timely, accurate, and accessible information to the public and stakeholders before, during, and after a disaster.

1.2.2 Vertical Integration with National Plans

The DRM Act, 2022 names two key plans from which all other plans flow. The first is the National Disaster Risk Management Plan (NDRMP) which will make provision for risk analysis and the establishment of resources to improve The Bahamas' resilience and risk management over time. The second is the National Disaster Emergency Plan, from which other operational plans, protocols, and

guidelines, including this FIDEP, flow. Fig 1.2A summarises this FIDEP's relationship to other national plans.

Fig1.2A FIDEP and its Relationship to National Plans



1.2.3 Horizontal Integration with Local Plans

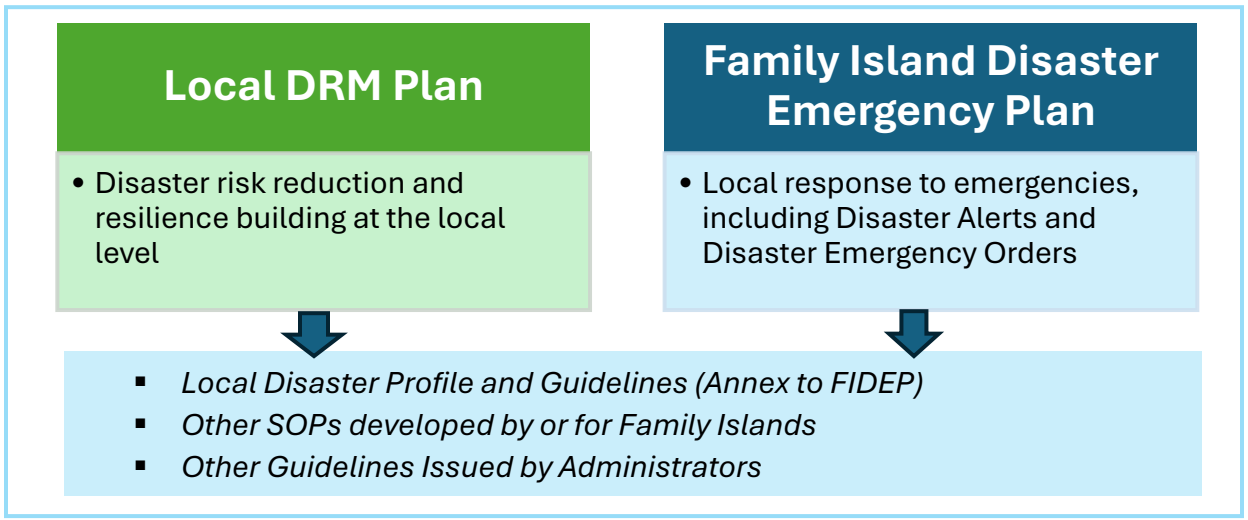
The DRM Act[1] sets out two required plans to be implemented by Family Island Administrators (FIAs):

- A Local (Family Island) Disaster Risk Management Plan
- A Local (Family Island) Disaster Emergency Plan

These plans are to be developed by FIAs, with the guidance of the DRM Authority and after consultation with their Disaster Risk Management Consultative Committee. This FIDEP is the Local Disaster Emergency Plan, developed in consultation with Administrators for general application by Family Islands.

Notably, several Family Islands had Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Plans, developed prior to the DRM Act of 2022. These typically capture a range of relevant information on the local disaster structure and services, the most common disaster risks by area and a list and locations of key infrastructure (major roads, ports etc.) within each local government district. They include practical details, including names and contact details for key personnel, location of shelters and general tips and guidelines for maintaining safety during a disaster event. This information is now contained in the Local Disaster Profile and Guidelines, an Annex to this FIDEP (see Fig 1.2B).

Fig 1.2B: FIDEP and its Relationship to other Local Plans



1.2.4 Relationship between the NDEP and the FIDEP

The NDEP provides guidance for comprehensive emergency response at all levels (national, regional and local). The NDEP focuses on national coordination of more complex incidents while the FIDEP focuses on the roles played by local actors at the local government and community levels.

[1] See DRM Act, 2022, s.11

1.3 FAMILY ISLAND DRM SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

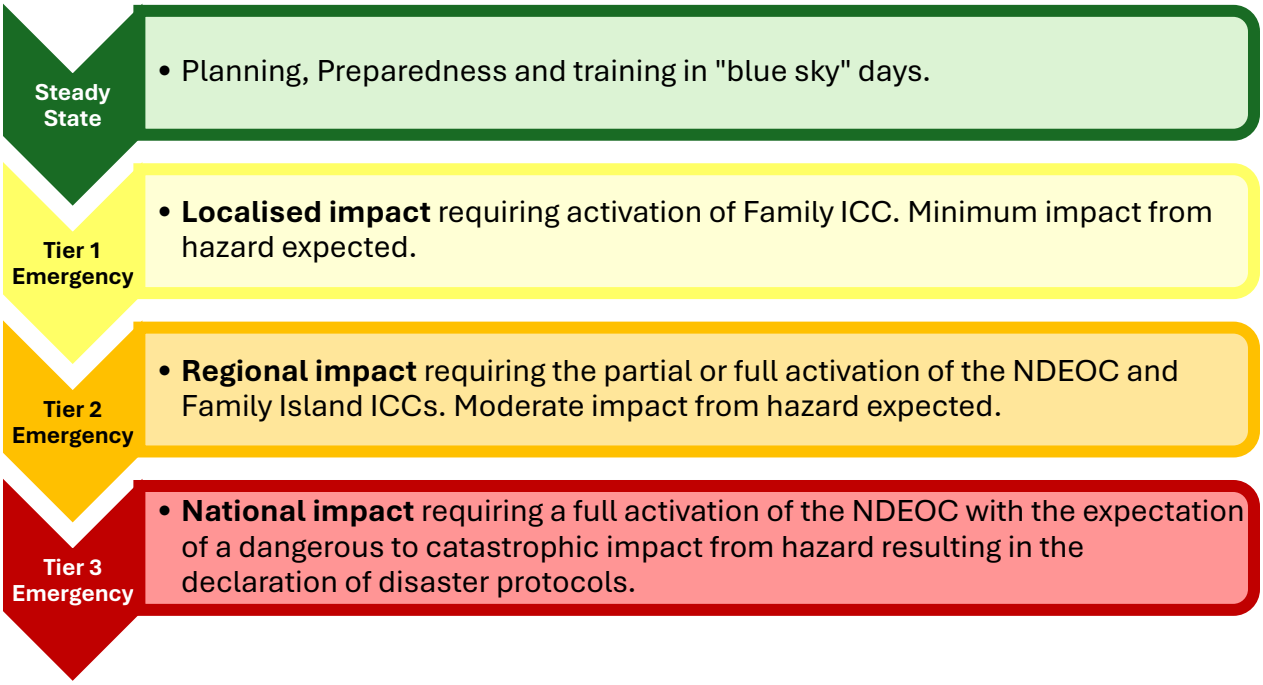
Family Island Administrators (FIAs) are the lead coordinators of local disaster emergency response. They are supported by the DRM Consultative Committees formed under the DRM Act, 2022. At the Family Island level, DRM Consultative Committees are responsible for advising Administrators on disaster risk issues relevant to their locality (see DRM Act Part VI, Section 34). These Consultative Committees are appointed by the Minister with responsibility for DRM on the advice of the DRM Authority and each FIA. FIAs chair these Committees, which are comprised of members of their respective District Councils. Depending on the local conditions within a Family Island, there may be other groups that support DRM and disaster emergency early warning, response and recovery, for example Community Surveillance Networks and Volunteer Groups or local offices of public bodies or the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF).

2 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS [EXTRACTED FROM THE NDEP][2]

This Concept of Operations outlines the approach to be taken in responding to emergency situations. It uses a three-tiered model for categorizing emergencies and deploying different levels of response, based on the risks and resources associated with each tier.

See Figure 2.1 for an overview of the tiered disaster emergency response.

Fig 2.1: Tiered Emergency Response System



[2] As this plan is a subset of the National Disaster Emergency Plan, and as the NDEP's Concept of Operations outlines the role that FIAs play in relation to different levels of disasters, the same Concept of Operations is applied here.

3 FIA Categorization & Response Capacity Development

The goal of the national disaster management mechanism is to support local sufficiency in effective disaster response management through Family Island Administrators. This will ensure that The Bahamas develops and maintains the capacity to respond promptly to disaster events and impacts occurring in different communities in different geographic regions.

The FIDEP is designed to reflect differences in capability in different Family Islands, while promoting the development of disaster response capacity across all FIs. This is facilitated through the following categorisation system.

Category 1 FIAs have well-developed systems, locally accessible resources and effective SOPs. Based on its resources and local team capabilities, these FIAs can coordinate local *and* regional disaster response activities either independently or in support of the DRM Authority. They can therefore provide support to neighbouring FIAs within the region.

Category 2 FIAs can implement many emergency response activities independently, and other functions are well coordinated under the Authority's guidance. They are self-sufficient in many areas of disaster coordination and management.

Category 3 FIAs have the minimum standard of training and resources required for effective disaster emergency coordination under the guidance of the DRM Authority. They have limited local resources or assets but can coordinate some emergency response activities independently and are self-sufficient in a few areas of disaster coordination and management.

4 Disaster Alert, Early Warning and Pre-Event Activities

4.1 Role of FIAs in Hazard Monitoring and Early Warning Systems Processes

Early Warning Systems are developed through technical and scientific monitoring agencies, such as the Department of Meteorology or Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems Centre, working in partnership with the DRM Authority. FIAs have a role to play in supporting and coordinating community monitoring activities, as well as in supporting the dissemination of early warning information. For example, FIAs can provide support in:

- ☑ Disseminating information on hazard risks relevant to different communities).
- ☑ Developing hazard monitoring and reporting skills within communities, for example for monitoring wildfires.
- ☑ Developing community awareness of different types of early warning notifications and the activities that individuals and families should do in responding to each one.
- ☑ Disseminating information issued by the DRM Authority or the Department of Meteorology.
- ☑ Ensuring that all vulnerable groups have access to early warning and hazard monitoring information.

4.2 Responding to a Disaster Alert or Early Warning Notification

Where a Disaster Alert Order is issued or Early Warning Notification is formally sent, the FIA must ascertain the probability and expected scale of impact. In the case of a storm, this may depend on the projected trajectory, the scale and time of impact, maximum windspeeds, expected levels of rainfall etc. FIAs will hold immediate discussions with the DRM Authority to clarify the likelihood and intensity of impact and the communities most likely to be affected (e.g. which communities are in the direct path of a storm), so that they can prepare and respond effectively. This includes clarifying the types of communication support needed from the FIA to implement the Disaster Risk Communications Strategy locally.

4.3 Pre-Event Disaster Risk Communications

FIAs provide critical support to the DRM Authority in implementing disaster risk communications at the local level. FIAs will work with the DRM Authority to access local networks and community groups (including WhatsApp and ham radio groups). They help to ensure that national messages are adapted to local audiences, particularly any local vulnerable groups.

4.4 Pre-Event Assessments and Risk Reduction Preparations

Once a Disaster Alert Order has been issued or a disaster is imminent, the FIA will support and implement pre-event assessment activities. This may include assessing local buildings, infrastructure, shelters and relief stocks for readiness. FIAs may support the Ministry of Public Works and other government agencies that conduct technical assessments, to ensure accurate information is captured on the status of public buildings and assets. In addition to assessments, the period following an early warning can provide FIAs with the opportunity to implement risk reduction measures, such as safely storing files and equipment.

4.5 Pre-Emptive Evacuation

Under the DRM Act, Evacuation Orders can be implemented once a Disaster Alert has been issued. This means that evacuations can be formally implemented, and the National Mass Evacuation Plan activated before a disaster hits. Pre-event evacuations can also be done as voluntary activities, where residents in high-risk communities are encouraged to evacuate to safer locations, if their homes are not sound enough to shelter in place.

4.6 Pre-Event Shelter Activation

Pre-event shelter activation will be implemented in critical cases, for example, where a disaster event is highly likely to impact a community and damage to homes could result in loss of life in the most vulnerable areas. Pre-event shelter activation should be authorized by the DRM Authority and coordinated between FIAs and ESF 6: Mass Care, Shelter & Welfare. If evacuated residents have alternative options and shelters are not needed, the FIA may delay shelter activation until shelter spaces are needed.

5 Response Phase

5.1 Coordination, Communication and Decision-Making between FI Incident Command Centres and the DRM Authority

When a Family Island is directly affected by a disaster, emergency coordination can be implemented locally, or from the NDEOC as the command centre. This depends on a number of factors, including the level of impact and the scope of local response capacity. Once a disaster alert or early warning notification is issued, the DRM Authority consults with the Administrator in each affected island and determines the scope of the role they will play in disaster monitoring and response. After a disaster has occurred, discussions will surround the role of the Administrator in response, recovery and rehabilitation activities, based on the scope of damage.

FIAs support DRM Authority-Led coordination, including by activating local Incident Command Centres as a point of coordination with national operations. Additionally, FIAs will submit situational reports to the DRM Authority to ensure a comprehensive understanding of local impact and conditions, while liaising with and supporting local operations of public bodies and Emergency Support Functions. In localised (Tier 1) incidents where the response is within the scope of local capacity, the Administrator's roles be more expansive and could include serving as incident commander and directing the field response, while maintaining communication with the DRM Authority.

5.2 Overview of the Role of FIAs in the Disaster Response Phase

Whether leading or supporting coordination, FIAs play a critical role in disaster response operations. They are essential to the seamless and integrated delivery of response services at the Family Island and community levels, ensuring that all disaster-related needs are identified and addressed, and that response activities support increased community resilience. All disaster response functions of FIAs are guided by the expertise of the DRM Authority and must be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the DRM Act, the NDEP, the NDCP and other relevant plans, protocols and SOPs.

Depending on the capacity of the FIA office and network, their disaster response roles and responsibilities will include some technical support functions, for example:

- ☑ Conducting community surveillance activities, once the 'all-clear' is given by the DRM Authority after an event and sharing information with the Authority and other GoBH stakeholders.
- ☑ Coordinating the implementation of post-disaster evacuation activities, in partnership with the DRM Authority and responsible ESFs.
- ☑ Activating and supporting shelters, in partnership with the DRM Authority and responsible ESFs.
- ☑ Conducting damage assessment activities among affected communities, using tools and templates shared by the DRM Authority.
- ☑ Preparing humanitarian needs assessment reports, using templates and guidelines outlined in the National Humanitarian Assistance Standards and supporting relief distribution.

5.3 Event Monitoring and Disaster Risk Communication

During a disaster event, the FIA becomes a main source of information for the DRM Authority and the Public Information Officer to understand the degree and scope of impact being experienced at the local level. FIAs will therefore be required to monitor the local effects of the disaster, using networks of local stakeholders, and communicate disaster risk information to local communities.

5.4 Incident Command Centre and Field Operations

Under the incident command system outlined in the National Disaster Coordination Protocols, The Bahamas utilises a unified command approach. This approach is critical to the functionality of the National Disaster Emergency Operations Centre (NDEOC). In addition to shared resources and integrated communication, unified command structures require a single set of shared objectives guiding the disaster response, supported and complemented by institutional objectives that inform the mandates of different partners. FIAs participating in a coordinated emergency response process maintain their authority and autonomy within their respective agencies but agree – for the purposes of effective emergency response – to align behind a set of common goals and strategies. This facilitates effective coordination and prompt and timely multi-agency action, which can be critical to the success of lifesaving interventions.

At the Family Island level, Administrators may establish Incident Command Centres (ICCs) to manage the local emergency response. In areas where there are local offices of relevant public bodies, an ICC can be constituted like a smaller and simpler version of the NDEOC and will comprise key public bodies and non-government stakeholders who have a role to play in implementing emergency response activities. Additionally, FIAs may be required to provide support to Field EOCs, Field Hospitals, Field ICCs and other *ad hoc* emergency operations units.

5.5 Post-Event Surveillance and Reporting

After an 'all-clear' notification has been issued by the DRM Authority, the FIA will conduct surveillance activities using different methods, for example, conducting ground, marine or air reconnaissance or using drones to collect information and photos. This data will be used to prepare **Post-Event Surveillance Reports** that capture all information required by the DRM Authority (e.g. loss of life, displacement, damage to infrastructure, evacuation or humanitarian needs etc.).

5.6 Post-Event Evacuation

Evacuation procedures are guided by the National Disaster Emergency Plan and the National Mass Evacuation Plan. Where the need for post-event evacuation support arises, FIAs shall first clarify with the DRM Authority whether the point of coordination for the evacuation will be implemented centrally (through the Authority) or locally (through the FIA). Where the need for evacuation is urgent for saving lives, the FIA can assume the coordination role until the DRM Authority arrives. Whether coordinating or supporting an evacuation activity, the FIA will work closely with ESFs responsible for transport, local transport service providers, as well as the RBPF and the RBDF to move people safely and efficiently to safer locations.

5.7 Post-Event Shelter Activation

Shelter activation after a disaster event is a decision made by the DRM Authority, based on need. FIAs will consult with the Authority prior to activating shelters. Once shelters are activated, the FIA will work with the ESF 6: Mass Care, Shelter and Welfare responsible to ensure effective shelter management. This may include working with local and non-local volunteer groups, faith-based organisations and humanitarian organisations to provide relief, psychosocial support and other services to shelter residents.

5.8 Post-Event Damage Assessment

FIAs support national damage assessment by conducting appropriate reconnaissance activities and preparing reports, using guidelines provided by the DRM Authority. FIAs will provide an **Initial Damage Assessment Report** within the first 24 hours after the 'all-clear' is issued and a more in-depth report within a week. All FIA Damage Assessment Reports will be compiled with reports provided by ESFs and Public Agencies into a national Damage Assessment Report.

5.9 Humanitarian Needs Assessment

FIAs will conduct Humanitarian Needs Assessments for their respective islands, and shall prepare a Humanitarian Needs Assessment Report, using guidelines outlined in the National Humanitarian Needs Assessment Standards. These reports will include information from local partners and beneficiaries, including humanitarian, voluntary, charitable, faith-based or other community groups and community representatives.

5.10 Relief Collection and Distribution

FIAs are an integral aspect of a network of relief collection and distribution and work closely with ESFs, the DRM Authority and humanitarian organisations to ensure coordinated collection and distribution of relief across all communities. The role of the FIA will vary based on their capacity and available resources. Where feasible, local/regional warehouses will be stocked with humanitarian relief supplies to facilitate timely distribution. Any items kept in disaster relief warehouses should solely be used in post-event distribution and relief collection and distribution activities should be appropriately documented.

5.11 Coordination and Facilitation of NGOs

In the event of a major disaster and wherever the scope of local needs exceeds the capacity of the FIA and GOBH to respond, the FIA should work with the DRM Authority and the Non-Government Consultative Council to incorporate approved NGOs into emergency response activities.

5.12 After-Action Reporting

Once a disaster response period has been officially terminated by the DRM Authority, FIAs will prepare after-action reports, support post-event debriefing or research activities conducted by the DRM Authority or its approved partners.

6 Recovery and Rehabilitation Phase

6.1 FIA Responsibilities During the Recovery and Rehabilitation Phase

The scope, duration and complexity of a recovery and rehabilitation effort will depend on the nature of the hazard and the level of impact. FIAs may be required to coordinate the implementation of modest recovery activities from Tier 1 Disaster Emergencies. As the severity of impact increases, however, recovery planning, project management and monitoring will be led at the national level, with FIAs playing a critical role in securing community engagement and participation in decision-making, while ensuring that plans and activities are adapted to local needs and demographic requirements. The FIA's responsibilities during recovery may therefore include developing local plans, implementing local components of national plans, coordinating with or implementing local projects. Importantly, the FIA's role in recovery planning reflects a transition from response coordination to strategic rehabilitation and long-term resilience-building, consistent with the DRM Act's holistic risk management approach.

6.2 Community Engagement to Support Recovery Planning and Implementation

A key role of FIAs is to ensure that community members are engaged in recovery planning and implementation activities, in a way that is representative and takes any special needs into consideration. FIAs will work with the Authority, ESFs and Public Bodies to implement community consultation and participatory planning activities, ensuring all affected areas and demographic groups are able to represent their views and voices in recovery planning and implementation. This may require special attention to people with disabilities, the elderly, children and other vulnerable groups. FIAs will also seek to integrate local businesses and service providers in recovery activities, while coordinating rehabilitation activities with local NGOs and humanitarian organizations.

7 ANNEX 1: LOCAL DISASTER PROFILE AND GUIDELINES

7.1 SECTION 1: LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. **Name of Family Island** (or other area to which the plan applies)
2. **Detailed Map**
3. **Geographic Information**
    - Size in square miles
    - Peak elevation location and height in feet above sea level
    - Main towns and communities
    - Other geographic characteristics relevant to natural disaster risk
4. **Demographic Information**
    - Size of population
    - Breakdown of population into demographic groups (age, gender etc.), if available
    - Summary information on any vulnerable groups and local representatives and/or support services

7.2 SECTION 2: LOCAL RISK PROFILE

1. **Disaster-Related Hazard Vulnerability Analysis Summary**
2. **High Risk Communities and Areas**
    a. Communities with a history/heightened risk of storm surges
    b. Communities with a history/heightened risk of flooding
    c. Communities with a history/heightened risk of wildfires
    d. Communities with a history/heightened risk of drought

7.3 SECTION 3: LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CRITICAL ASSETS

1. **Road Network**
    a. Primary Roads (length, location and historic risks)
    b. Secondary roads (length, location and historic risks)
2. **Transportation Infrastructure and Assets**
    a. Transportation Hubs and Ports (size, location, historic risks and main liaison personnel)
    b. Other Transportation Infrastructure or Assets (e.g. gas stations) (type, location, historic risks and main liaison personnel)
3. **Water, Telecommunications and Utility Facilities and Infrastructural Assets**
4. **Health Facilities** (clinics, hospitals and nursing homes)
5. **Schools, Institutions and Special Facilities** (include social support facilities, homeless shelters, jails, other residential institutions etc.)
6. **Other Critical Facilities or Infrastructure**

7.4 Section 4: Local DRM Coordination and Support Networks

1. **FIA Contact Information and Emergency Response Personnel**
2. **DRM Consultative Committee Members and Contact Information**
3. **Local Representatives of ESFs**
4. **Local Representatives of Public Bodies**
5. **Local Non-Government Humanitarian and Disaster Response Organisations**
6. **Representatives of Local Communications and Community Mobilisation Networks**
7. **Disaster Risk Surveillance Networks** (key contacts by area and/or organisation)
8. **Other Volunteer Groups** (e.g. volunteer firefighters)

7.5 Section 5: Local DRM Services, Assets and Resources

1. **ICC Location**(s)
2. **Shelters**
3. **Evacuation Assembly Points**
4. **Resource Distribution Points**
5. **Local DRM Information Hubs** (virtual)
6. **Publicly Owned DRM Assets** (including type, location, custodian/operator contact information)
    a. Firefighting equipment and supplies
    b. Medical transportation equipment and vehicles
    c. Evacuation/search and rescue equipment and vehicles
    d. Satellite phones and communications equipment
    e. Relief warehouses and stores
    f. Heavy duty equipment

7. **Privately Owned DRM Assets** (including type, location, owner/operator contact information)
    a. Marine vessels
    b. Air transportation
    c. Land transportation
    d. Food banks
    e. Heavy duty equipment

7.6 Section 6: DRM Guidelines

1. **Hazard Specific Guidelines, Precautionary Measures and Safeguarding Instructions** for any of the following (based on main disaster risks).
    - Hurricanes
    - Tropical Storms
    - Coastal Floods
    - Storm Surges
    - Wildfires