



SURVIVING THE STORM: THE DISASTER DEFENSE DIGEST

Monthly Safety Message:

Emergency Fuel Planning

During a disaster, fuel becomes more than a supply issue. It can determine whether ambulances reach patients, evacuation buses complete their routes, generators power shelters and medical equipment, and response vehicles remain in service. Power outages, damaged roads, refinery disruptions, and increased demand can quickly limit access to gasoline and diesel.

Emergency fuel planning should identify priority users, backup suppliers, storage capacity, delivery routes, and procedures for rationing limited supplies. Agencies should also track generator run times, vehicle fuel levels, and the needs of hospitals, water systems, communications sites, and public safety facilities.

When fuel planning is overlooked, even well-equipped response teams can become stranded. Reliable fuel access keeps critical services operating, supports evacuations, and helps communities move from immediate response toward recovery.



this issue

When Summer Becomes a Crisis **P.1**

Prepare Together **P.2**

Situational Awareness **P.3**

When Summer Becomes a Crisis

Extreme heat rarely comes with shattered buildings, flooded streets, or visible debris. It settles quietly over homes, workplaces, sidewalks, and parked vehicles. Because the damage is often measured in illnesses rather than wreckage, communities may underestimate how quickly heat can become a disaster.

A weather advisory is important, but information alone cannot protect someone who has no air conditioning, cannot afford higher electricity costs, lacks transportation, works outdoors, or lives alone. Older adults, young children, people with chronic illnesses, outdoor workers, and those without stable housing may face greater danger. Heat can also worsen existing health conditions with little visible warning and progress from cramps or exhaustion to life-threatening heat stroke.

Cooling centers are valuable, but opening a building is only the beginning. People must know where it is, trust the organization operating it, and have a safe way to get there. Centers also need accessible entrances, extended hours, drinking water, backup power, space for service animals, and plans for medications or medical equipment.

Effective heat response reaches beyond cooling-center walls. Emergency managers can coordinate transportation, neighborhood wellness checks, hydration stations, public messaging, worker protections, and outreach through schools, Tribal governments, faith communities, nonprofits, libraries, and local businesses.

Employers also have a critical role. Water, rest, shade, training, adaptation, and flexible schedules can prevent workers from becoming patients. Supervisors should know the early signs of heat illness and create a workplace culture where employees can report symptoms. When heat safety is treated as an operational responsibility rather than a personal burden, workers are more likely to receive help before a preventable emergency occurs.

Extreme heat is not simply uncomfortable weather. It is public health, infrastructure, housing, workplace, and equity emergency. Treating it as a disaster means planning for the people who are hardest to reach, not just those who can easily respond to an alert. The most effective heat plan is one that brings relief directly to the community before a medical crisis begins.

Quick Tip: When Water Systems Fail

When a water system fails, the impact reaches far beyond an empty faucet.

Contamination, pressure loss, broken mains, damaged treatment facilities, and power outages can quickly disrupt homes, hospitals, schools, fire protection, and businesses. Emergency planning should identify backup water supplies, critical facilities, vulnerable populations, alternate distribution sites, and clear lines of communication before a crisis begins.

Boil-water notices must be issued quickly, written in plain language, and shared through trusted community channels. Residents need to know whether water is safe for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, preparing infant formula, or washing dishes. Officials must also explain how long to boil water, when bottled water is necessary, and how people will be notified when service is safe again.

Strong planning connects utilities, emergency managers, public health agencies, Tribal governments, healthcare providers, and community organizations. When responsibilities are clear and relationships exist, communities can respond faster, reduce confusion, and protect public health.



Prepared Together: Why Emergency Management Starts with All of Us

When people hear “emergency management,” they often picture firefighters, police officers, emergency medical teams, or officials gathered inside an emergency operations center. Those professionals are essential, but they are only part of the system. Real preparedness depends on ordinary people knowing what to do before help arrives and understanding how their choices affect the larger community.

Employees are often the first to notice a problem at work. They may smell smoke, see a chemical spill, recognize a medical emergency, or receive a severe weather warning. Knowing evacuation routes, reporting hazards, participating in drills, and following workplace emergency plans can prevent confusion and save lives. Prepared employees also help organizations recover faster because they understand their responsibilities and know who to contact.

Families form another critical layer of preparedness. A household that has emergency contacts, medications, food, water, flashlights, backup power, and a communication plan is less likely to need immediate assistance during a crisis. Family planning should include children, older adults, people with disabilities, pets, and anyone who depends on medical equipment or transportation support.

Volunteers provide valuable support before, during, and after disasters. Community Emergency Response Team members, faith-based groups, amateur radio operators, food banks, animal rescue organizations, and neighborhood volunteers may assist with sheltering, donations, wellness checks, cleanup, and public information.



Training and coordination matter, because spontaneous help is most effective when it supports, rather than disrupts, official operations.

Businesses also play a major role. They provide jobs, supplies, transportation, facilities, communications, and essential services. A business continuity plan can protect employees, reduce economic losses, and help restore normal community life. Grocery stores, pharmacies, fuel providers, contractors, utilities, and local vendors often become vital partners during recovery and can provide crucial support.

Community organizations bring trusted relationships that government agencies may not have. Tribal governments, nonprofits, schools, cultural organizations, disability advocates, and neighborhood groups understand local needs, languages, traditions, and barriers. Including them in planning leads to better warnings, more accessible shelters, and stronger public trust.

Emergency management works best as a shared responsibility. Professionals coordinate the response, but resilience is built every day by people who prepare, communicate, practice, and look out for one another. In a disaster, everyone has a role, and every prepared person strengthens the whole community. Preparedness is practical care put into action before crisis.

The Human Side of Situational Awareness

Emergency operations centers today can display live maps, weather feeds, traffic cameras, satellite imagery, resource dashboards, and social media reports. These tools can help leaders understand a fast-moving incident, but no screen can capture everything happening in a community.

Situational awareness is the ability to understand current conditions, recognize what is changing, and anticipate what may happen next. FEMA's National Incident Management System emphasizes gathering, analyzing, assessing, sharing, and managing incident information so decision-makers can build a common operating picture. Technology supports that process, but the picture is only as reliable as the information entering it.

A field employee may notice that a creek is rising faster than the sensor suggests. A firefighter may report that an evacuation route is blocked by vehicles or fallen trees. A utility worker may recognize that an outage will affect a water system, communications site, or medically vulnerable neighborhood. These observations provide context that databases often cannot.

Dispatch reports are equally important. A cluster of calls about breathing problems, stranded motorists, smoke, flooding, or power loss may reveal an emerging pattern before it appears on an official dashboard. Individual calls can seem routine, but together they may signal that conditions are changing or that public messaging is not reaching the people who need it. Computer-aided dispatch systems provide valuable real-time information, but the details communicated by callers and dispatchers help tell the full story.

Community knowledge adds to another essential layer. Tribal leaders, neighborhood advocates, faith based



organizations, school staff, local businesses, and long-term residents often know which roads flood first, where older adults live alone, which families lack transportation, and which communication channels people trust. FEMA guidance recognizes that formal and informal community leaders can provide valuable knowledge and a fuller understanding of the places they serve.

Relationships determine whether that knowledge reaches decision-makers. Partnerships built before a disaster make it easier to verify reports, identify unmet needs, correct misinformation, and move resources quickly.

Human information still requires careful validation. A field report may be incomplete, and a social media post may be wrong. Good situational awareness does not accept every report as fact. It compares sources, confirms details, documents uncertainty, and updates the operating picture as new information arrives. FEMA guidance identifies accuracy, timeliness, validation, analysis, and appropriate information sharing as central parts of incident information management.

Data helps emergency managers see farther, but people help them understand what the data means. The strongest decisions come from combining technology with field experience, dispatch intelligence, community knowledge, and trusted local relationships. In a data-heavy environment, the human voice is not background noise. It is often the first warning that the situation on the ground has changed.

GET CERTS...!

**Train with Purpose.
Lead with Impact. Build
Your Future.**

Ready to step into something bigger than a job? CAL TERRA's training programs are designed to turn everyday people into skilled responders, environmental stewards, and community leaders. Whether you're looking to launch a new career, gain real-world certifications, or strengthen your community's emergency readiness, this is where it starts.

Our hands-on training blends classroom learning with field experience, giving you the confidence to respond when it matters most. From HAZWOPER and emergency response to environmental restoration and workforce development, every course is built for real-world impact, not just theory.

You won't just learn, you'll do. You'll train alongside professionals, gain recognized certifications, and become part of a growing network focused on resilience, safety, and opportunity.

This is more than training. It's a pathway.

Step up. Get trained. Make a difference.

Be part of something that matters. For more information about our training programs, contact us at:
info@calterra.org

