

# Anatomy of a disaster

The 426-page National Response Plan outlines how local, state and federal agencies should respond to a disaster. The plan's basic premise calls for local and state officials to handle the initial crisis and for federal assistance to be delivered when regional resources prove inadequate. A look at how federal agencies performed when faced with Hurricane Katrina:

Agency	Responsibilities	Responses
<p><b>White House</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Delegates responsibility for disaster response to government agencies.</li> <li>■ Declares federal emergency to allow for federal aid in hurricane relief efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ President and many top White House staff remain on vacation during initial stages of crisis.</li> <li>■ White House blames state and local officials for inadequate response.</li> <li>■ President relies heavily on FEMA's optimistic and can-do assessments.</li> <li>■ White House considers and rejects federal takeover of National Guard after Louisiana governor objects.</li> <li>■ President doesn't expect the levee breaches, despite explicit warnings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of Homeland Security</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Coordinates federal resources and organizes disaster relief efforts in response to major disasters.</li> <li>■ Homeland Security secretary serves as principal federal official and overall manager.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ground teams without working telephones or radios. Planes laden with communications equipment arrive late.</li> <li>■ Due to communication breakdown, department chief unaware of broken levees in New Orleans for 24 hours, announces highest emergency declaration two days after first levee breach. Government unable to respond swiftly to levee damage.</li> <li>■ Chief initially unaware of city's convention center evacuees without supplies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Federal Emergency Management Agency</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Supervises relief and rescue operations.</li> <li>■ Support state and local emergency management preparation and response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Insufficient equipment and supplies for relief and rescue operations.</li> <li>■ Food, clothing and medical supplies in distant warehouses.</li> <li>■ Shortage of helicopters to conduct rescue missions and ferry sufficient supplies to trapped evacuees.</li> <li>■ Slow coordinating private relief efforts.</li> <li>■ FEMA blocks aircraft responding to evacuation requests from hospitals and other agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Guard</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Military's first responders to a domestic crisis.</li> <li>■ Troops ensure order and deliver communications, transportation and supplies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Red tape and paperwork delay troop deployment orders.</li> <li>■ Flooding halts flow of relief supplies by truck.</li> </ul>
<p><b>U.S. Military</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Active duty troops carry out non-law enforcement missions during domestic emergencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Troops put on alert to respond to hurricane but not sent to disaster area.</li> <li>■ Several days pass before significant numbers of active duty troops arrive in New Orleans.</li> </ul>

Sources: Department of Homeland Security's National Response Plan, Times reports  
 Graphics reporting by BRADY MACDONALD