

**BAY COUNTY
DISASTER AREA RE-ENTRY POLICY**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this attachment is to provide general guidance for disaster area re-entry operations in the event of a catastrophic event where an official Emergency Declaration and Mandatory Evacuation Order has been issued and remains in effect. It addresses standardized reentry phases and other factors affecting re-entry activities. Re-entry is the portion of disaster operations that initially involves getting emergency response forces and equipment into disaster affected areas as quickly as possible to search for victims, provide essential medical treatment and patient evacuation, assess immediate needs and eliminate major health and safety hazards so that additional response and recovery operations can be safely conducted. After initial re-entry by emergency response teams and elimination of major health and safety hazards, provisions are made for industry repair crews, business suppliers, business owners other essential parties to be provided access to disaster areas. This phased approach is intended to get emergency resources into disaster areas quickly, minimize public exposure to dangerous conditions that often prevail in disaster areas and provide timely entry to affected areas for local residents, businesses and industry when conditions permit.

II. SCOPE

Disaster area re-entry is typically undertaken in the aftermath of large scale evacuations for hurricanes and tropical storms in Bay County. However, re-entry operations may be necessary in any disaster where a large, heavily populated area is evacuated and suffers major damage from a natural or technological hazard or a large scale terrorist incident. Disaster re-entry operations are typically ground operations, but may be supported by aircraft and/or watercraft where these resources are available and appropriate. Re-entry operations are generally conducted in the following sequence:

- A. Deploying emergency response forces to gain access to areas impacted by a major hazard.
- B. Setting up access control points staffed by law enforcement personnel to limit public access to impacted areas that have significant life safety or public health threats.
- C. Abating the most significant health and safety conditions within impact areas to facilitate reasonably safe movement in such areas by emergency responders, and later, the public.
- D. Allowing controlled re-entry of business owners or operators, repair crews for essential services, relief organizations and personnel to assess damage, salvage belongings, and implement expedient repairs to prevent further damage. During this phase of re-entry, curfews may be in effect and a pass system may be implemented.

- E. Ending most access restrictions for the general public, but restrictions may continue in areas with large volumes of debris, uncontained hazardous substances or biological hazards.

- 1. **DISASTER AREA RE-ENTRY**

- a. Bay County shall develop a phased re-entry plan to govern the order in which particular groups of people are allowed to re-enter areas previously evacuated because of a disaster or threat of disaster. The plan may provide different re-entry procedures for different types of disasters.
 - b. The phased re-entry plan shall:
 - (1). Recognize the role of emergency management, local government & law enforcement in making decisions regarding the timing and implementation of re-entry plans for a disaster; and
 - (2). Provide emergency management, local government & law enforcement with sufficient flexibility to adjust the plan as necessary to accommodate the circumstances of a particular emergency.
 - c. Bay County, in consultation with representatives of local government, shall develop a re-entry credentialing process. The County of Bay shall include the credentialing process in the phased re-entry plan.

- III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

- A. SITUATION

- 1. A Key component of Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government is preparedness plans which include deliberate plans to ensure the continuation of essential functions through a wide range of incidents. These plans will also entail the priority restoration of these functions in the event of a service outage.
 - 2. Due to the potential devastation of a catastrophic event and impact on local communities, Bay County must be prepared to augment and assist with re-entry operations, when warranted, and the restoration of essential functions of government.
 - 3. Re-entry operations must include provisions for federal, state, private sector, public sector, volunteer organizations and agencies that provide critical services to assist first responders in the execution of their duties and those in direct support of critical infrastructure/key resources (CI/KR).
 - 4. If essential functions are not restored quickly and efficiently, the cascading impacts on life and property may include negative impacts on local, state and national interests.

5. Public safety and security in a disaster area must remain paramount in re-entry planning and operations.
6. The re-entry plan must be flexible and scalable to ensure a suitable operational response to the disaster and provide coordinated access to various agencies and organizations that perform essential mission tasks in the area of operations. This plan will work in coordination with the local officials to provide re-entry to appropriate agencies and individuals to the impact area.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

1. A major hurricane has the potential to create widespread catastrophic damage in Bay County.
2. If there is a threat of a major hurricane making landfall on the Bay County Coast, the Governor will likely issue a state disaster declaration and, depending on characteristics of the threat, may request a federal emergency or disaster declaration.
3. A key component of Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government is preparedness plans which include deliberate plans to ensure the continuation of essential functions through a wide range of incidents. These plans will also entail the priority restoration of these functions in the event of a service outage.
4. Local governments and emergency responders will likely be engaged in disaster response operations that require state assistance to provide perimeter security and entry and exit control operations.
5. Federal assistance may be necessary to restore CI/KR. In instances where national interests are in jeopardy, the Department of Homeland Security may exercise authority to reach outside provisions of the Stafford Act.
6. The communications infrastructure in disaster impact areas will likely sustain major damage, creating communications gaps and limitations over a widespread area. Re-entry forces are expected to require fundamental communications.
7. The electrical utility infrastructure in impact areas is expected to sustain significant damage, leaving thousands of homes and businesses without power and without the capability to pump water, operate waste water systems and fuel vehicles. Damage to the electrical grid can cause power outages that extend well inland.
8. Re-entry forces are expected to encounter significant quantities of debris on re-entry routes during the initial entry phase, including vegetation, building debris, wrecked vehicles, and other materials. Heavy equipment will likely be needed to aid the re-entry forces during the initial stages of re-entry. Additionally, re-entry forces may require specialized technical

support to identify and deal with hazardous substances that have been released and contaminated the environment.

9. Re-entry forces may require fire suppression resources to deal with ongoing fires in impact areas.
10. Re-entry forces will require supplies of food and water. For extended re-entry operations, base camp support may be required in the disaster area or at forward staging areas.
11. As medical facilities in impact areas may be inoperable, re-entry forces will generally require attached medical support to provide basic medical assistance for disaster victims until they can be evacuated and to safe locations with medical support.
12. During past major disaster evacuations, evacuees left areas where they took temporary refuge and attempted to return to their homes as soon as roads were passable. It is anticipated some evacuees may arrive while initial response activities are underway and re-entry forces are opening routes to disaster areas will be followed by people trying to enter those areas. Access control points staffed with law enforcement personnel must be established quickly. Additionally, public information personnel should ensure timely information is provided to the media each day regarding which disaster areas are accessible to business owners, operators and residents.
13. Access control points will be established to limit access to evacuated areas and reduce public exposure to dangerous conditions; lack of utilities, food, water and essential medical services and fire protection, and to curtail theft from unoccupied buildings. Patrols will likely be conducted to maintain security in evacuated areas. It is generally desired to identify possible access control points in advance and ensure there is adequate space to turn around unauthorized vehicles. Law enforcement personnel should be prepared to activate appropriate access control points and operate them as soon as it is clear which areas have suffered significant damage. To ensure consistency, all access control points should have specific written guidance on who may be admitted. Implementation of a pass system may be appropriate.

VI. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Bay County adheres to and employs a three-phased approach to re-entry. The phased approach is intended to get emergency resources into disaster areas quickly, minimize public exposure to dangerous conditions that may prevail in disaster areas, and provide timely entry to affected areas for local residents, businesses and industry when conditions permit.

Phase 1(Red) - Initial Re-entry by Emergency Responders

This phase is generally expected to occur during the first hours after it is safe to re-enter a disaster area. Access to the disaster area in Phase 1 (RED) should generally be limited to:

- a. Search and rescue teams to locate and remove disaster victims.
- b. Utility company employees engaged in eliminating life safety hazards, such as gas leaks or downed power lines.
- c. Medical teams to treat or evacuate disaster victims with health and medical needs and identify follow-on support required.
- d. Fire service units to control or prevent fires in damaged areas.
- e. Public works team to remove debris from primary roads and provide access for other emergency responders.
- f. State agency emergency response teams identifying hazardous materials, containers and spills.
- g. Law enforcement and other security personnel.
- h. State and local emergency management personnel performing initial damage assessments and identifying essential needs.
- i. Mass care organizations providing emergency food and water to disaster victims.
- j. Marked state and local mobile command posts and communications vehicles.
- k. Media representatives, who may require escort in dangerous areas.
- l. Medical personnel for all hospitals and clinics to include pharmacy personnel, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, ambulatory surgical centers, doctor's offices/groups, home health care agencies and compressed gas providers (02).

Appropriate Identification and Credentials for Red Phase Organizations:

- 1) Marked state or local response vehicles, uniformed emergency responders, and responder badges or photo ID card for law enforcement, fire, and EMS personnel.
- 2) Marked military vehicles, uniformed personnel, and military ID card for military personnel.
- 3) State agency or local response team vehicles, distinctive clothing, and agency or team ID card.
- 4) Marked utility response vehicles and corporate photo ID cards indicating bearer is a member of their organization.

- 5) Marked vehicles and/or government issued identification cards for public works teams, emergency management personnel, and certain specialized response unit.
- 6) Photo ID for medical personnel indicating the bearer is a member of their organization.
- 7) Marked media vehicles and appropriate media credentials.
- 8) Regional or local government responder credentials.
- 9) All personnel within this phase group who are not issued organizational photo ID must obtain a Phase 1 (Red) Re-entry pass.

Phase 2 (Yellow) - Limited Re-entry

- a. It is generally inadvisable to permit the return of residents to a disaster area until provisions are in place to provide at least emergency medical services and some basic fire protection. This does not mean that medical facilities and fire stations in the disaster area need to be restored, but rather the expedient capabilities are available.
- b. Local officials may consider establishing a curfew during the limited re-entry phase to curtail night movement until some lighting and traffic signals can be restored.
 - 1) In Phase 2, access to the disaster area is expanded to allow essential business owners and operators to return to portions of the disaster area where major life safety hazards have been eliminated, but essential services, such as electricity, water and fuel may be limited or unavailable. Access in Phase 2 should generally be limited to:
 - 2) Local business owners and operators to assess damages to their businesses and make expedient repairs.
 - 3) Insurance agents/adjusters, i.e.; with state licensing/credentials and/or company ID.
 - 4) Banking Institutions, fuel distributors and food distributors.
 - 5) Commercial vehicles delivering food, ice, other essential supplies, fuel, generators, construction supplies and related material.
 - 6) Debris removal contractors
 - 7) Utility repair contractors
 - 8) Construction contractors for repair
 - 9) Volunteer groups and state and federal agencies providing assistance to disaster victims
- c. *Appropriate Identification and Credentials for Phase 2 Organizations:*
 - 1) Marked state or local response vehicles, uniformed emergency responders, and responder badges or photo ID card for law enforcement, fire and EMS personnel.
 - 2) Marked military vehicles, uniformed personnel and military ID card for military personnel.
 - 3) For State agency, local government or volunteer groups marked emergency response team vehicles, distinctive clothing and agency or team photo ID card.

- 4) Marked utility response vehicles and corporate photo ID identifying bearer as an emergency response team member.
- 5) Marked vehicles and/or government issued ID cards for public works teams, emergency management personnel and certain specialized response units.
- 6) Photo ID for medical personnel indicating bearer is member of their organization.
- 7) Marked media vehicles and appropriate media credentials.
- 8) Regional or local government responder credentials.
- 9) For *business owners*, photo ID and business card showing a business address in the disaster area.
- 10) For *contractors*, corporate photo ID and work order for an address in the disaster area.
- 11) All organizations within this phase group (yellow) are targeted for issuance of re-entry credentials provided by the Bay County Department of Emergency Services. The intent of allowing certain essential personnel access during the yellow phase is to ensure at least minimum private and public sector services are available before allowing the general population to return to a disaster area.

Phase 3 (Green) - General Return

- a. Phase 3 of re-entry involves re-opening most or all of the disaster area to local residents and businesses. Major life safety threats have been eliminated, but many hazards remain and some vital services, such as electricity, water and fuel may be limited or unavailable. A curfew may still be in effect in the disaster for specific periods, typically nights.
- b. Before announcing the decision to authorize a general return of residents to a damaged area, local officials should notify law enforcement officials in those areas that may be affected by the return traffic flow in order that traffic control resources can be deployed.
- c. In the early stages of Phase 3, local officials may allow residents and business owner/ operators to enter the disaster area, but prohibit visitors if visitor traffic would delay delivery of essential supplies and equipment to the impact area, impede debris removal or draw down scarce fuel supplies. Restrictions on visitors entering disaster areas are normally lifted as soon as is reasonably feasible.