

Emergent and Disaster Mass Feeding in New Jersey

Over the last several years, fires, storms and other events have impacted the residents of New Jersey. Often times, these events necessitate the relocation of residents to emergency shelters in order to get them out of harm's way. Larger events and storms displace people for longer periods of time. As part of helping those people in their time of distress, government, with the support of our many partners, plans to provide basic nourishment through food and beverage to these impacted individuals.

New Jersey Public law requires that all levels of government prepare to meet the needs of our residents during times of disasters and emergencies. These plans are captured in each jurisdiction's Emergency Operations Plan. These plans are developed for each municipality, county and the state. They are the legal documents that governments are required to follow during these types of emergency events.

This document is a basic outline of the role of government and the support we can expect from our partners for various levels of emergency or disaster in the state. During a disaster, we rely on many partners to support our response operations. State, County and Local partners play a key role but it is the support of the Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based and Faith-Based organizations that make a difference. They provide volunteers and donations to support our communities in times of crisis. Organizations such as the American Red Cross (ARC), the Salvation Army (TSA), the Community Foodbank of NJ, the Southern Baptists and many others make a difference in feeding operations conducted throughout the state.

In your mass care planning efforts, please take a few moments to review your plans so that they coincide with the capabilities of your community and the partners you are seeking support from. Be sure to periodically meet with and engage your identified partners in order to discuss your needs and the capabilities your partners can provide during a disaster. Once you have identified the partners to support your operation, it is very important to enter into Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs) and/or Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with your new partners to ensure that every one is in agreement on how the mutual support will be conducted. MOU/MAAs are also important if the level of emergency reaches a federal disaster declaration to claim the costs of the operation for possible reimbursement.

Local Event (Localized Flooding, Apartment Fire, impacting one community)

Emergency planners should review local MOU/MAAs with restaurants, convenience stores and larger establishments to provide food and beverage during these shorter, no notice events. TSA can support these events to the extent that is described in local agreements. These events are "easier" for our partners to support since the impact of the event is limited to a small

geographical area. Resources requested from TSA and ARC would be done directly from the on-scene Incident Commander or local Emergency Manager.

Regional or Countywide Event (impacting multiple communities and/or an entire county)

Emergency planners at the county or multi-jurisdictional level should be working with partners to establish time-lines for response as well as levels of service expected to meet the needs of the impacted communities. Because of the larger geographic area, multi-jurisdictional response partner resources (TSA, ARC) will be directed from the county emergency management office; this to ensure that limited resources are deployed to areas where they can do the most good. Also, partners will be re-deploying resources from other areas of the state to assist. This will cause some delay in getting support to all impacted communities or areas affected.

Again, municipal jurisdictions should activate local MOU/MAAs with local providers to fill gaps until disaster partners can get on scene and provide services. Maintaining and utilizing these local relationships will expedite services as well.

Multi-County or Statewide Event

This implies some type of catastrophic event impacting New Jersey or a significant portion of the state. For these types of events, the Governor of the State will declare a State of Emergency, issue Executive Orders and/or activate the State's Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP). At this point, all of the partner resources fall under the control of the State Director of Emergency Management, through the Mass Care Coordinator. This is not to say that partner resources will not be available to towns and counties, it does mean that not everyone will get a canteen in their town. There are just not enough resources to put one in every community. Also, feeding needs will be prioritized so it is important to activate local MOU/MAAs early and plan to maintain local operations as long as possible.

Partners will be working to support the entire state. This could happen a number of ways; a Canteen preparing food on site, an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) setting up at a location and distributing prepared food or a pick-up or van delivering commodities or prepared food to support a shelter or fixed feeding site. Partners like the Community Foodbank of NJ and the Southern Baptists can set up and prepare thousands of meals a day in order to support feeding operations. Delivering these prepared meals is a very efficient way to feed large numbers of people relatively quickly and efficiently.

Conclusion

At every level of government New Jersey plans to feed our impacted communities. Based on the nature and size of the event, it may take time for outside resources to arrive to a specific impacted area. The State of New Jersey plans to support every community but we must remember that it may take time to get all of the resources into the state and deploy them to where they are needed.

Planning and MOU/MAAs at the local level are key to the success of a mass feeding operation. A robust local feeding plan needs to be developed, refined and practiced in order to support the impacted communities as well as the disaster and first responders.

Local Jurisdictions should work within their communities and with their Counties and our feeding partners to ensure resources are identified and in place for the next emergency or disaster when they will be needed most.

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