

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-781](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

FEMA is responsible for integrating federal disaster logistics efforts—that is, the ability to deliver goods to disaster survivors. The NRF guides how the nation is to respond to all types of disasters, and its ESF 7 Annex describes the actions that FEMA is to take in collaborating with federal partners and state and local stakeholders to deliver disaster logistics support and assess state and local logistics capabilities.

GAO was asked to assess FEMA's disaster logistics efforts. This report discusses the extent to which FEMA has (1) implemented ESF 7 guidance and incorporated leading practices for interagency collaboration with its federal partners, and (2) implemented ESF 7 guidance in collaborating with state and local stakeholders and incorporated effective program management practices for its logistics assessment program. GAO reviewed relevant documentation such as interagency agreements and ESF 7 responsibilities, and data on delivery of resources from fiscal years 2010 through 2014. GAO also interviewed FEMA and federal partner officials, as well as a nongeneralizable sample of 10 states and 1 territory in order to gain insight into FEMA's efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FEMA identify the LMD and regional resources needed to implement the LCAT, and establish and use goals, milestones and performance measures to report on the LCAT program implementation. DHS concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-15-781](#). For more information, contact Christopher Currie at (404) 679-1875 or curriec@gao.gov.

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FEMA Collaborates Effectively with Logistics Partners but Could Strengthen Implementation of Its Capabilities Assessment Tool

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has taken actions described in the *National Response Framework* (NRF), Emergency Support Function #7 (ESF 7) Logistics Annex, to work with its federal partners in a manner that reflects leading practices for interagency collaboration. For example, FEMA's Logistics Management Directorate (LMD) has facilitated meetings and established interagency agreements with ESF 7 partners such as the Department of Defense and the General Services Administration, and identified needed quantities of disaster response commodities, such as food, water, and blankets. These actions reflect ESF 7 guidance to establish collaborative relationships and interagency agreements to leverage federal partners' capabilities to support disaster response efforts. Additionally, FEMA defined desired outcomes and measures to monitor the progress and success of federal ESF 7 collaborative efforts. For example, FEMA tracks the percentage of disaster response commodities delivered by agreed-upon dates, and available through FEMA and its ESF 7 partners. As a result of these actions, FEMA's work with its federal partners reflects leading practices for interagency collaboration—such as identifying a lead agency and shared responsibilities and defining outcomes to measure success—and should help LMD demonstrate preparedness to meet ESF 7 functions.

FEMA has taken steps to collaborate with state and local stakeholders in accordance with ESF 7, but could employ effective program management practices to strengthen the implementation of its Logistics Capability Assessment Tool (LCAT). FEMA—through LMD and its regional offices—offers training and exercises for state and local stakeholders, developed the LCAT, and established an implementation program to help state and local stakeholders use the tool to determine their readiness to respond to disasters. Specifically, the LCAT is designed to help state, local, and tribal officials identify strengths and weaknesses and improve logistics processes and procedures using a standardized approach and measurement criteria. For example, officials from one state told us that the results of their state's LCAT assessment helped them identify the need for additional airlift support as part of their evacuation planning efforts. While feedback from states that have used the LCAT has generally been positive, implementation of the program by FEMA's regional offices has been inconsistent. For example, since LMD transferred responsibility for implementing the LCAT program to the regional offices in 2013, 3 of 10 regional offices no longer promote or support LCAT assessments. Further, LMD's transition plan for the transfer of implementation responsibilities did not incorporate some leading program management practices identified in the *Standard for Program Management*. For example, LMD did not identify staff resources needed to implement the program, and did not develop program goals, milestones, or measures to assess the effectiveness of implementation efforts. As a result, LMD's ability to assess the effectiveness of regional implementation efforts is limited. Identifying necessary resources and defining goals and measures would help LMD and the regions more consistently implement the LCAT program, which could enhance state and local logistics capabilities in disaster response.