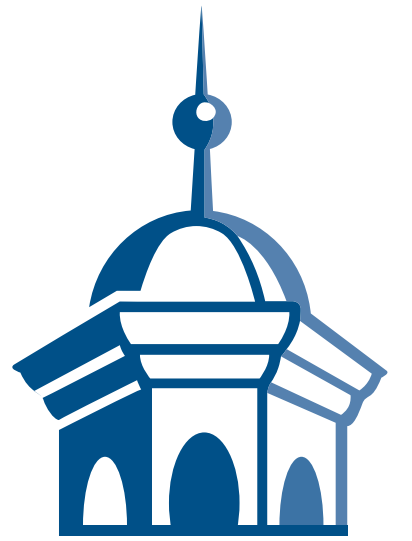


Vermont League of Cities and Towns

June 10, 2025



Are You Ready for Your Next Disaster?

VLCT Municipal Operations Support Team:

Katie Buckley, Municipal Operations Team Director

Kathleen Ramsay, Municipal Operations Specialist

Bonnie Waninger, Project and Funding Specialist

VLCT's Municipal Operations Support Team is here to help you succeed...

Our team has specialists in:

- Project Development & Financing
- Government Finance
- Municipal Operations

Find us: <https://www.vlct.org/municipal-operations-support>

Contact us: info@vlct.org or [Ask A Question](#)





are
you
ready?

Today's Topics

- Lessons from the 2023 and 2024 disasters
- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Proactive steps to maximize disaster funding
- FEMA's funding process and requirements

The recorded training will be posted in the VLCT Resource Library at: <https://www.vlct.org/resource-library>



Lessons from Vermont's 2023 & 2024 Disasters



Disaster readiness means...

- **Preparing** before disaster strikes,
- **Responding** during the disaster event, and
- **Positioning** your community for long-term recovery after the disaster

Lessons from Vermont's 2023 & 2024 Disasters



Key Learning – In a Nutshell

- Proactive planning and actions pay off
- Effective communication is essential during a crisis
- Community resilience and recovery works best when everyone works together

Lessons from Vermont's 2023 & 2024 Disasters

Proactive Planning



Key Learnings

- Have and fund a capital program
- Infrastructure investment pays off
- Flood risk is more than high water
- ***Prepare to be on your own for the first 72 hours***

Lessons from Vermont's 2023 & 2024 Disasters

Effective Communication during a Crisis



Key Learnings

- Plan for how information will flow
- Know how you will continue basic government operations
- Define and integrate critical facilities and operations into your plan of action

Lessons from Vermont's 2023 & 2024 Disasters

Working Together Produces the Best Results

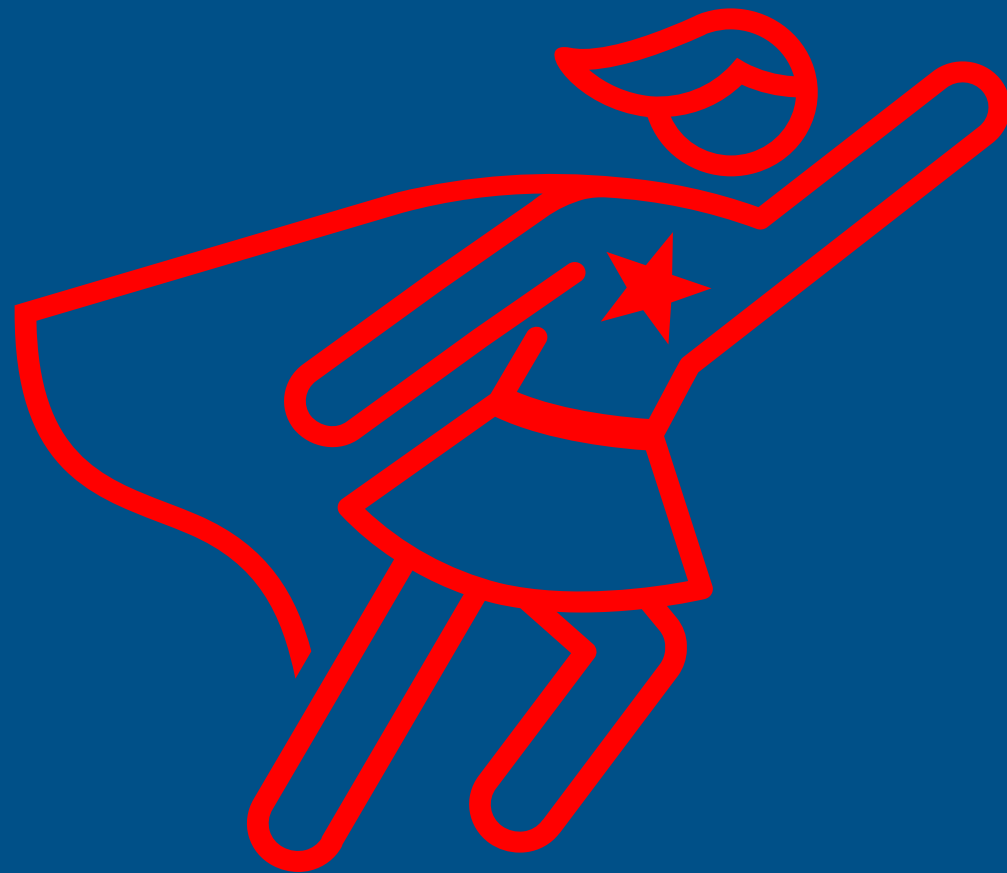


Key Learnings

- Municipal and community needs are different and related. Both need to succeed for communities to recover.
- Rivers don't respect municipal boundaries. Recovery doesn't either.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Build a Strong Emergency Management Team



Appoint a Capable EMD

- The Emergency Management Director (EMD) oversees and coordinates the local emergency management effort. This includes managing resources for incident command, maintaining the Local Emergency Operations Plan, and ensuring the Local Emergency Operations Center is operational.
- Vermont Emergency Management offers 2-hour and 8-hour training courses for EMDs through its Learning Management System.
- EMDs should have strong working relationships with emergency response, DPW and administrative personnel, as well as the Selectboard and the public.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Build a Strong Emergency Management Team

Strategies from Vermont's Small Towns



- Appointment of an **Emergency Management Coordinator** (EMC) to assist the Management Director
- Establishment of a **Natural Disaster Preparedness Committee** to maximize municipal efforts to have a coordinated preparation and response to future floods
- Formation of a **Damage Assessment Team**
- **Use a stipend** for Emergency Management Director
- Considering using **Block Captains**, local citizens who assist the EMD/EMC to scout needs in defined areas

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Build a Strong Emergency Management Team

Strategies for Regional Cooperation

Built out of an initial communication plan concept discussed by the Caledonia-Essex Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC), a method was developed to:

- Allow EMDs support each other and request resources systematically and in an organized manner.
- Leverage and extend the coordination communities have always done.
- Keep the region informed of what is happening and to quickly open pathways to start mutual aid support between towns and EMDs.

This plan is available to other REMCs in the state to encourage collaboration and coordination before a disaster strikes. Contact VEM.

Source: [VEM Newsletter, May 2025.](#)



Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Build a Strong Emergency Management Team

IS-100.C:
INTRODUCTION TO THE
INCIDENT COMMAND
SYSTEM ICS 100
STUDENT MANUAL



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Strategies for Learning the Basics

- FEMA's ICS100, **Introduction to Incident Command Systems** provides a helpful overview of response to and operations during an emergency event.
- Offered through VEM's online Learning Management System or through FEMA's Emergency Management Institute.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding



Key Learnings

- Have a solid financial foundation
- Act now to build your communication infrastructure
- Take proactive steps to speed response and recovery
- Know requirements for different disaster programs
- Build a strong emergency management team

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation



Personnel

- Track, record and pay expenses
- Access and manage grant funds
- Submit insurance claims
- Manage cash flow

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation



Polices – Common Audit Findings

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Procurement/Purchasing Policy

VLCT's new federal funds-compliant procurement policy is under external review and will be released soon!

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation



Procedures

VEM Risk Assessment Survey

- Written Procurement Procedures
- Accounting software (vs. manual)
- Track receipts and disbursements by funding source
- Independent Audit (Single Audit if \$1M or more in federal expenditures per FY)

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation

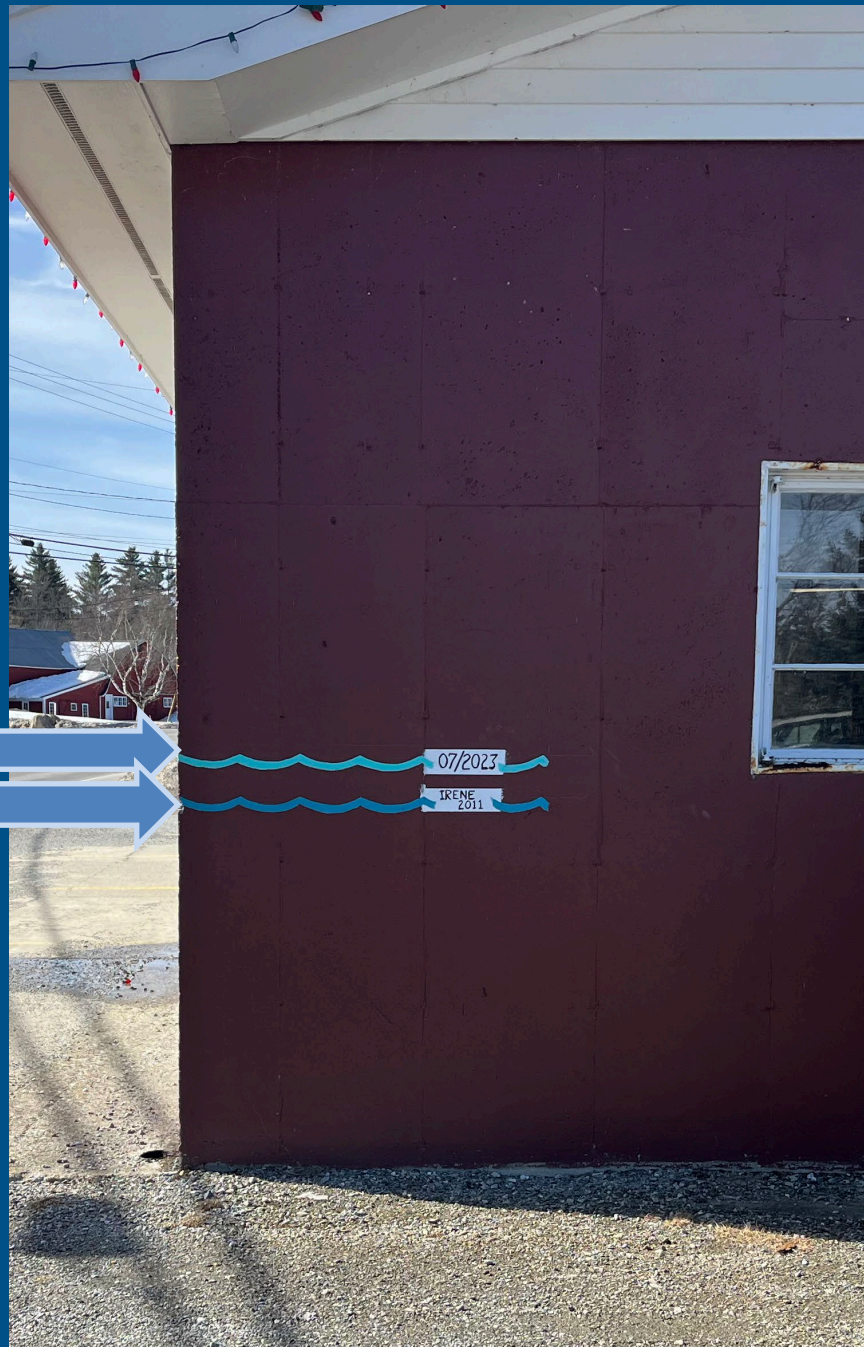


Contracts and Agreements

- Prepositioned contractors and suppliers
- Mutual aid agreements
- Maintenance agreements

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation



JULY 2023
IRENE 2011

Flood Level Markings on Weston Fire Station

Insurance

- Regularly review and update insurance inventory, include:
 - Buildings & Contents
 - Vehicles & Equipment
 - Facilities
- FEMA Obtain/Maintain Requirements

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Build a Strong Financial Foundation



Money to Pay Bills

- Cash Reserves*
- Plan for Short-Term Financing
- Emergency Borrowing Authority*

*New legislation was just passed to make these easier thanks to VLCT's advocacy work in 2025!

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

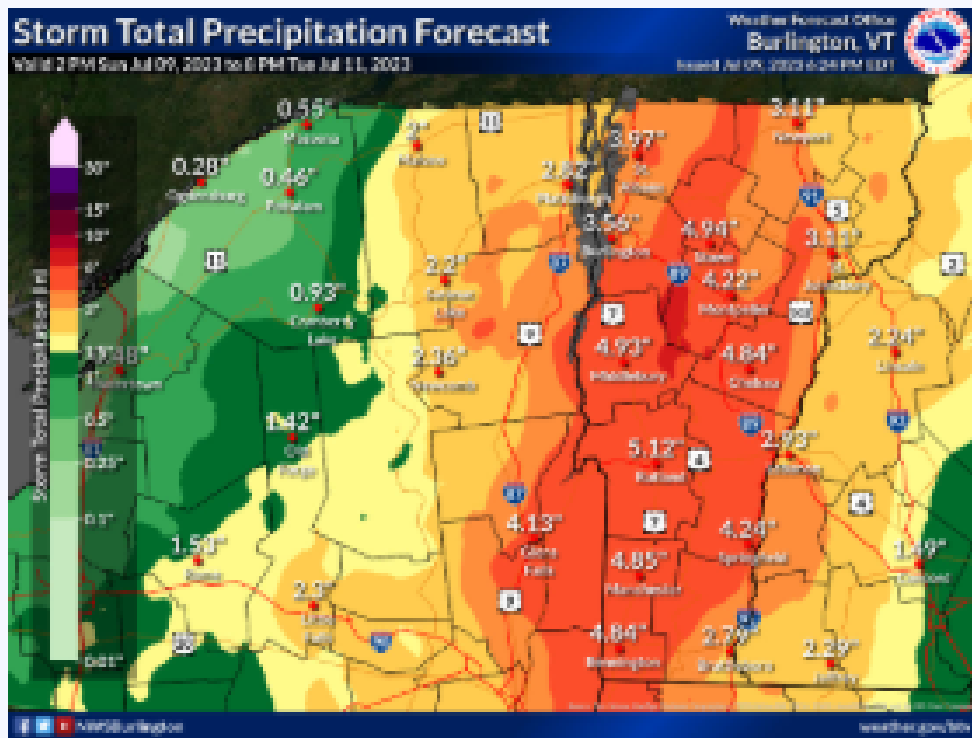
Build a Strong Financial Foundation



Critical Takeaways

- Take steps now to be prepared for an emergency event
- These steps will give your town a solid financial foundation, which could increase your competitiveness for other grant programs
- Expect increased monitoring of federal grants

Effective Communication During a Crisis



Catastrophic, life-threatening flooding expected in Vermont starting Sunday

By Paul Heintz

July 9, 2023, 2:42 pm



- Act now to build communication infrastructure

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Effective Communication During a Crisis



SIGN-UP FOR TOWN TEXT & EMAIL ALERTS!

More information on these
services can be found [here](#).

Effective Communication Tools

- Website
- E-Newsletter
- Text Alerts
- Vermont Alerts
- WAZE
- Front Porch Forum
- Media

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Effective Communication During a Crisis



Communication Strategy

Develop communications plan for emergency events that includes:

- spokesperson(s)
- formats to reach all populations
- distribution outlets

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Importance of Proactive Planning



Plans - Review, update, and adopt:

- Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)
 - Should be updated annually. 2025 new requirements include:
 - Written agreements for shelter locations, if not owned by the town
 - Plans for disposal of debris removed after storms
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - Must be updated every five years, approved by FEMA, and adopted by the municipality's legislative body

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Importance of Proactive Planning

Understand and Maximize ERAF:

- **Maximize eligibility for disaster reimbursement from the State's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF)**

ERAF matches FEMA Public Assistance reimbursements by at least 7.5%. For communities that take specific steps to reduce flood damage the State will contribute 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost.

- **Know your municipality's current ERAF eligibility level**

For steps can you take to increase your percentage match, visit Flood Ready Vermont.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Importance of Proactive Planning



TOWN ROAD AND BRIDGE STANDARDS
TOWN OF _____, VERMONT

Requirements for Road Repairs

- Adopt and follow State-approved Town Road & Bridge Standards (The Orange Book)
- FEMA will use your adopted codes and standards when determining eligible work

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Importance of Proactive Planning

MAP SHOWING
FEDERAL AID HIGHWAYS
of
VERMONT HIGHWAYS
compiled by
VERMONT AGENCY of TRANSPORTATION



FEMA and FHWA disaster programs differ!

- Check the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Federal Aid Highway maps on the Vermont Agency of Transportation's website to see your Federal Aid highways
- Contact your District Transportation Administrator in advance of Federal Aid Highway damage repair!

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Importance of Proactive Planning



Critical Takeaways

- Don't make repairs that you wouldn't normally make.
- Don't upsize or expand the project unless you are willing to risk paying for it.
- Follow your road standards in making repairs (unless directed otherwise **IN WRITING** by the funding agency)

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Best Practices Prior to a Known Emergency Event



➤ **Contact your Emergency Management Director**

Confirm their availability for the anticipated duration of the event and discuss plan for information sharing between Vermont Emergency Management and other state agencies, local public safety, public works personnel and administrative personnel, elected officials and the public.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Best Practices Prior to a Known Emergency Event



- **Review Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP).**
- Identify location for **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**, if needed.
- Identify location and parties responsible for **Emergency Shelter**, if needed.
- **Verify availability** of police, fire, emergency response, highway, water and wastewater personnel.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Best Practices Prior to a Known Emergency Event



- If flooding is anticipated, monitor water levels.
- Inspect culverts, drainage ditches and bridge abutments and clear obstructions. Consider taking photos of pre-damage condition of known problem areas to bolster your claim for damage assistance.
- Plan strategy for **volunteer management**. Consider designating one person/agency as the volunteer coordinator.
- **Print out maps** or verify access to online mapping tools for use in the EOC for ease of reference and damage site tracking,

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Submit Insurance Claims Promptly



- **Buildings, Equipment & Facilities** – collect information for all the above **AND, file your insurance claim.**
- If insured through the VLCT Property & Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF), file a claim at <https://www.vlct.org/report-claim/report-claim> or 800-649-7915.
- Providing prompt notice and maintaining close communication with adjusters can shorten the amount of time it takes to receive payment for covered losses.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Document, Document, Document



For previous disasters, information required by FEMA for documentation of damage and repair expenses included:

- **Number** - assigning a number for each site is suggested for ease of tracking
- **Location** – be specific as possible, include road name, distance from nearest intersection or landmark. GPS Latitude/Longitude will be required for reimbursement and can be obtained after the event.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Document, Document, Document



- **Date Damaged**
- **Description of Damage**
- **Cause of Damage**
- **Take Pictures of Damaged Sites**
 - Show damage from multiple angles
 - Add scale indicator, if possible
 - Pre-damage photos help document damage
 - Number and label all photos to include the location each site

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Document, Document, Document



Debris Removal and Emergency Repair Measures -

For each site note:

- **Labor** - employee/contractor/volunteer name and hours for each location worked;
- **Equipment** - municipal/contractor/volunteer equipment used and hours for each location worked;
- **Supplies and materials used**, whether purchased, on-hand and/or donated; write notes on load slips for the quantities used by location.
- **Volunteer hours and equipment should be tracked** – these donations can be used toward the Town's match for FEMA grant funds. Track names, equipment types, hours, locations for each.

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Document, Document, Document



For each expense, you will need the following:

- Contract, including required contract clauses
- Invoices/statements
- Canceled checks

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

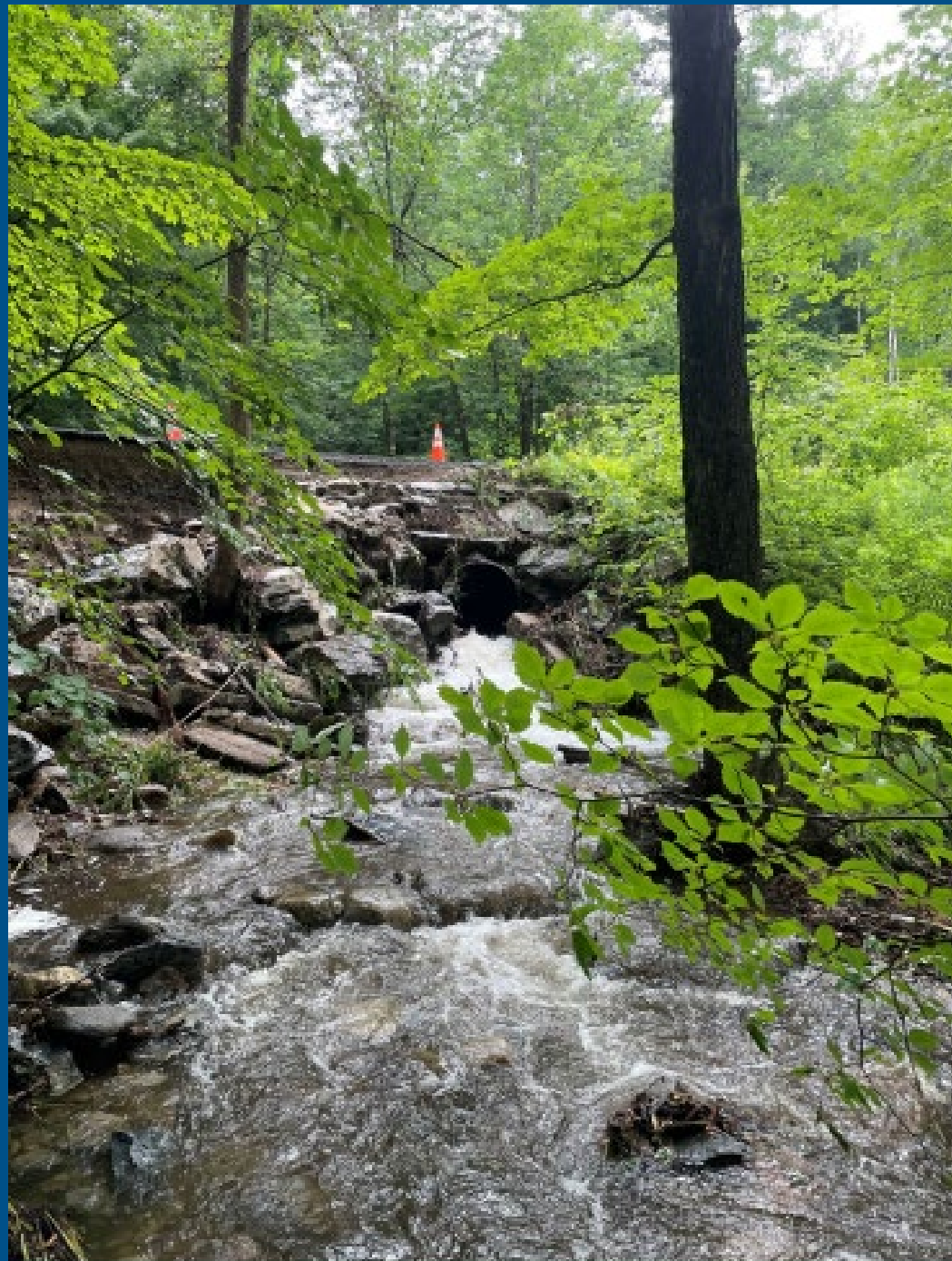
Document, Document, Document



- **Pro-Tip: Track expenses for all repairs due to storm damage**, regardless of whether the storm is (or will be) declared a disaster by the Governor and/or President.
- Documentation of repair costs will support your applications for FEMA's Hazard Mitigation grants and other funding programs to give you a competitive edge!

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Document, Document, Document



- **Keep notes on each site as you go!** This will make your life easier when submitting requests for reimbursement!
- **Make regular contact with your Emergency Management Director (EMD).** The EMD will share this information with Vermont Emergency Management to support the declaration of an emergency, both locally and statewide, which is needed to make the event eligible for FEMA Funding.
- **Include everything in your damage assessment!** Let FEMA be the ones to decide whether it's eligible. It is much easier to drop things from an application than it is to add them later.
- **Include “iffy” projects.** They will not jeopardize other projects. And...they might get funded!

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Pre- and Post-Disaster Funding Opportunities



Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Previously eligible project types have included:

- Buyouts of flood prone properties
- Structural elevations & mitigation reconstruction
- Natural resource projects, such as floodplain restorations or dam removals
- Infrastructure projects, such as upsizing bridges or culverts
- Floodproofing of municipal or commercial buildings
- Road relocation, elevation, or soil stabilization

Proactive Steps to Maximize Disaster Funding

Pre- and Post-Disaster Funding Opportunities



Other disaster recovery assistance programs

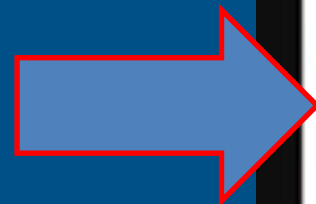
- HUD Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program (when authorized and allocated to VT)
- USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Disaster Recovery and Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants
- USDA Rural Utility Services Disaster Water Grant
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection
- EDA Disaster Supplemental

Contact VLCT's [Municipal Operations Support team](#) for information about available programs and help with project development.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works

You are here



Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



- Municipality acts to prevent loss of life or property.
- The Emergency Management Director (EMD) considers activating its Emergency Operations Center.
- The EMD may seek assistance from State Emergency Operations Center, and reports damages to Vermont Agency of Transportation District Technician and/or Regional Planning Commission (usually within 72 hours of event).

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



- **Document damage with notes, photos, measurements and locations (GPS).**

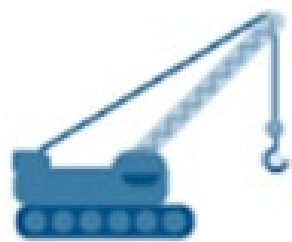
These costs will be used by the State in an Initial Damage Assessment to determine if they meet threshold to request a federal disaster declaration.

- **Reach out to your Agency of Natural Resources River Engineer immediately to report any damage in/near waterways.**

They can make determinations about upsizing culverts and bridges and issue emergency and permanent repair permits.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



Work is categorized as either "emergency" or "permanent." It must be required as a result of the declared incident, located within the designated disaster area, and is the legal responsibility of the applicant.



Cost is the funding tied directly to eligible work, and must be adequately documented, authorized, necessary and reasonable. Eligible costs include labor, equipment, materials, contract work, as well as direct and indirect administrative costs.



Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works

EMERGENCY WORK - MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN SIX MONTHS

- Category A: Debris removal
- Category B: Emergency protective measures



PERMANENT WORK - MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN 18 MONTHS

- Category C: Roads and bridges
- Category D: Water control facilities
- Category E: Public buildings and equipment
- Category F: Public utilities
- Category G: Parks, recreational, and other facilities



Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



The distinction between ***emergency*** and ***permanent repairs*** is crucial for procurement under FEMA grants.

- **Emergency repairs** are immediate actions to prevent loss of life/property, restore essential services and minimize damage.
- **Permanent repairs** aim to restore facilities to their pre-disaster condition.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



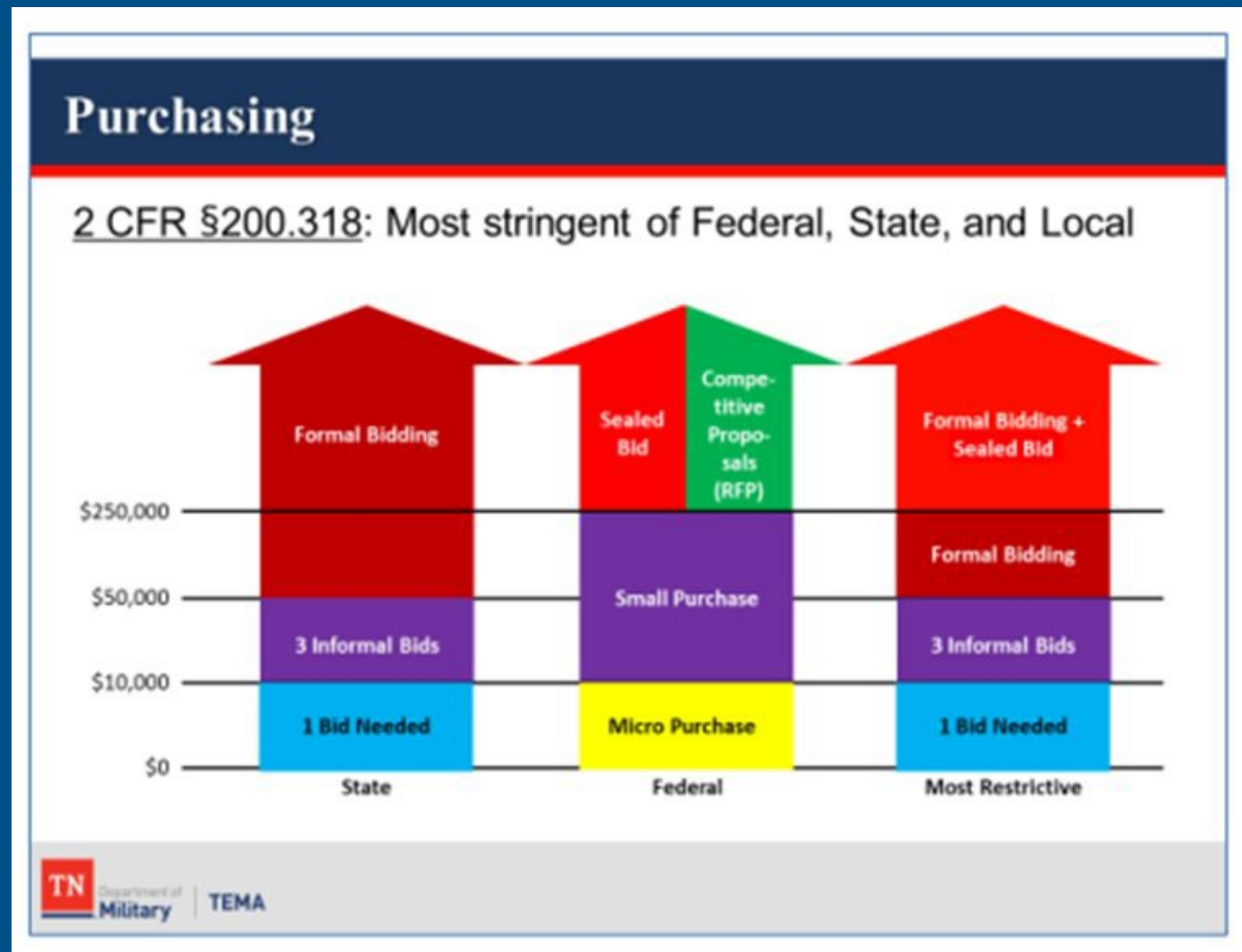
FEMA's procurement rules apply to both emergency and permanent repair categories.

Specific guidelines apply to each type of repair.

- Emergency repairs may allow noncompetitive procurement due to the urgency of the situation
- Permanent repairs typically involve competitive bidding

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



- Understanding these differences is essential for compliance with Federal procurement standards and for effective disaster recovery planning.
- VLCT has model Requests for Bids, RFPs, and contract documents.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



Administrative help is an eligible expense.

- Under the FEMA PA program, up to 5% of your total obligated damages (e.g., the costs reimbursed by FEMA) are available to you to pay for the administration of the grant application. **This includes hiring outside vendors and consultants.**
- VLCT has model RFPs on its website.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

How FEMA's Disaster Process Works



If a disaster is declared, Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) holds briefings for FEMA PA applicants.

This briefing highlights new FEMA program information, provides a reminder of program requirements, and highlights key deadlines to keep in mind. Check [Vermont Emergency Management's Flood Resources](#) page for information about applicant briefings.

Know FEMA's Funding Process and Requirements

Maintain Awareness of Potential Changes



FEMA.gov is being updated to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

- Check VLCT, VEM and/or FEMA Public Assistance websites for the most up-to-date guidance.
- Potential Federal policy changes under consideration include:
 - Increased thresholds for Presidential Disaster Declarations.
 - Block grants to states for small disasters.

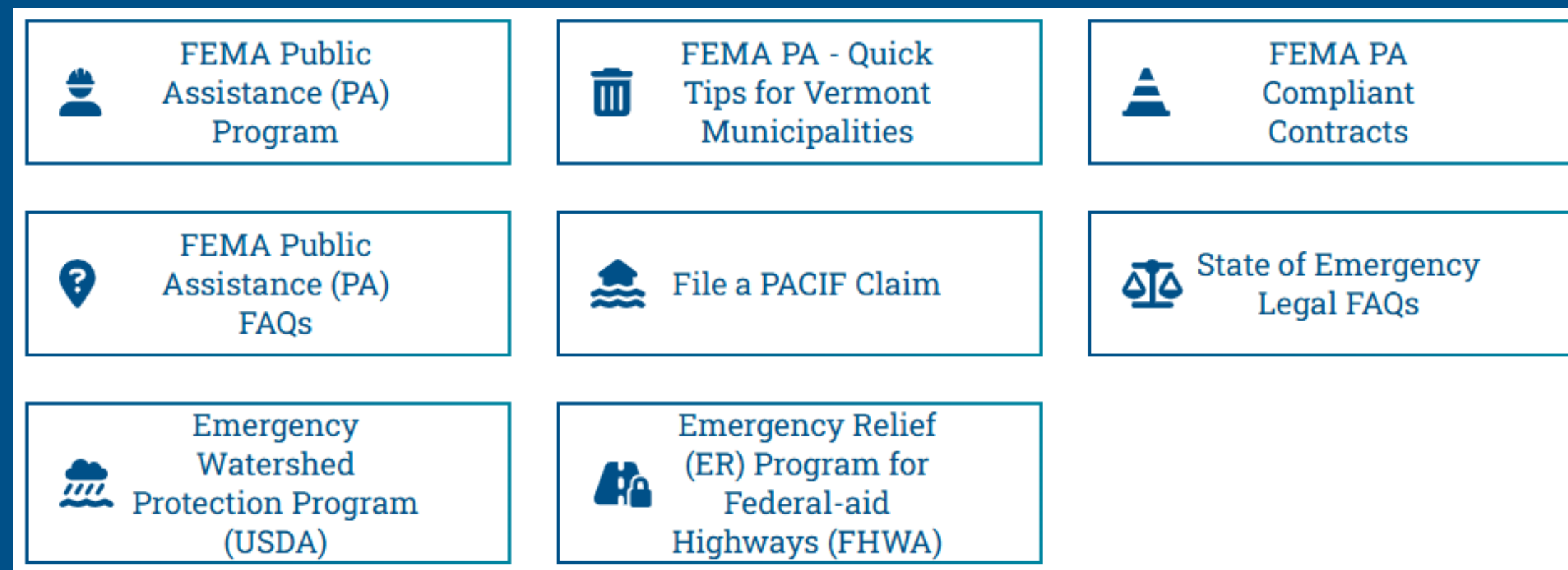
Disaster Takeaways

- Dealing with disasters is a marathon, not a sprint!
- You are not alone – there are many organizations and resources available.
- Don't forget to take care of yourself while you are taking care of others!



Are You Ready for Your Next Disaster?

VLCT's Flood: Preparedness, Response & Recovery webpage* provides extensive information about FEMA's Public Assistance Program, USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection Program, FHWA's Emergency Relief Program, filing claims with PACIF, and much more....



* Find VLCT's Flood Preparedness, Response & Recovery webpage at <https://www.vlct.org/topics-all/flood-preparedness-response-recovery>

Thank You!

Thank you to Vermont Emergency Management, VLCT's Municipal Operations Support Team and PACIF staff for providing the technical expertise and resources used to develop this document.



Vermont League
of Cities & Towns



Department of Public Safety

Vermont Emergency Management

Have questions?

LET US KNOW!



Katie Buckley, Director, Municipal Operations Support

Kathleen Ramsey, Municipal Operations Specialist

Bonnie Waninger, Project and Funding Specialist

kbuckley@vlct.org

kramsey@vlct.org

bwaninger@vlct.org

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