



Hurricane Sandy
FEMA Region I, II, III, IV and V
October 26 – November 19, 2012
ESF #11 After Action Report (AAR)



Incident Summary

Hurricane Sandy (and Winter Storm Athena) was a substantial storm that impacted the United States. Sandy was the second-largest Atlantic storm on record, affecting the East Coast from Florida to Maine, as well as states as far inland as Indiana. The storm made landfall in southern New Jersey on October 29, 2012, battering the region with heavy rains, strong winds, and record storm surges. Three FEMA Regions plus subsequent FEMA Joint Field Offices Mission Assigned ESF#11 for various lengths from days to weeks, with additional ESF#11 Alerts and planning activities in two FEMA Regions. Summaries are provided by FEMA Region activation order below.

FEMA Region III: Thursday, October 25 FEMA Region III (FR3) issued an Advisory Notification Message identifying ESF#11 activation to the FR3 Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) for 07:00 Sunday, October 28. FEMA indicated Mission Assignments would be provided by noon on Saturday, but a draft ESF#11 Mission Assignment was received much later. FEMA was having Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) issues so Mission Assignments would be delayed.

On Friday, October 26 FEMA requested 2 Animal Care (AC) SMEs to support ESF#6 in the RRCC. There was confusion over the FR3 request for Animal Care, which was initiated by a FR3 email request to FEMA and AC personnel in the National Capital Region, rather than to the ESF#11 Coordinator. As this was a FEMA ESF#6 request based on information from NCR personnel rather than ESF#11, they were Mission Assigned under ESF#6. FR3 was notified AC would provide the personnel, and there were concerns about deploying the AC personnel without a formal Mission Assignment. The draft Mission Assignment for AC to support ESF#6 was received noon Sunday, and approved. The formal AC Mission Assignment was received end of the day Monday, October 29.

Animal Care Eastern Region went to extra effort to get personnel deployed to the FR3 RRCC by Sunday. On Saturday, October 27 the ESF#11 Coordinator made contact with Animal Care personnel deploying from Indiana and North Carolina and provided logistical support including hotel and RRCC information and telephone numbers. No written Mission Assignment had been received, but the Animal Care personnel traveled in order to get to the RRCC. AC arrived midday Sunday at the RRCC and ESF#6 was notified. ESF#6 approved AC release to settle into their hotel, and to begin working the Sunday nightshift.

Due to lack of work space at the ESF#6 desk, AC shared desk space with ESF#11. AC maintained coordination with ESF#6 desk and were standing by to support. There were no requests from the State or the deployed IMAT teams for AC support. There was a request from the Mass Care cell on Monday night for AC to contact the State ESF#11 desks for ESF#11 updates for the evening SITREP. The ESF#11 Coordinator had made these calls prior to leaving at 19:00 and notified Mass Care that there was no additional information for the SITREP.

AC contacted the ESF#11 Coordinator for assistance who in turn contacted the Mass Care lead and again provided the information.

There was minimal storm related damage within the region. There were no shelter, feeding or pet related issues. With no AC issues or support identified/required by the state FR3 ESF#6 - Mass Care verbally notified the AC SMEs that there was no longer a requirement for their support and that they would be demobilized Wednesday, October 31. The ESF#11 Coordinator requested and received an email notification of the AC demobilization. ESF#11 was demobilized on November 1.

FEMA Region II: The FEMA Region II (FR2) ESF#11 Coordinator took part in situational awareness and planning activities as the storm passed by Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands the week prior to the storm impacting NY and NJ. FR2 activated most ESFs Sunday, October 28. The ESF#11 Coordinator noticed FR2 reported level 1 staffing for all ESFs, but there had been no activation for ESF#11. Upon inquiry FR2 stated ESF#11 was supposed to get an activation notice but their system was experiencing problems. The ESF#11 Coordinator reported to the RRCC at 18:20 Sunday October 28.

Beginning October 29, ESF#11 provided day shift coverage (07:00-19:30) for Hurricane Sandy. The ESF#11 Coordinator monitored state and federal activities to provide coordination and support. Considerable effort was required to ascertain or “ground truth” information or to direct requests from NRCC personnel or determine where resources came from when the states did not request the resources. Examples included individuals at the national level made arraignments to provide pet food to the local level when states did not request it. Requests emerged repeatedly from the NRCC for baby food and baby formula that caused confusion. After researching the requests, it became clear that FEMA logistics was only seeking points of contact for suppliers; there had been no actual request.

The ESF#11 Coordinator participated in NJ and NY ESF6 and Human Services conference calls. ESF#11 coordinated with NJ State, federal and private entities to obtain requested USDA Foods for congregate feeding. The ESF#11 Coordinator provided state, USDA contact info to the Corps of Engineers on debris and the USDA plant pest quarantines. Daily shelter population and power outages information was provided to FNS to assist their response.

On November 2, it was announced the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) would take over the operations of the RRCC and Area Command would be under FEMA Deputy Administrator. This was a new procedure that had not been previously identified or exercised. Also that day, FR2 gave the ESF#11 Coordinator a Mission Assignment for USDA Intergovernmental Affairs for Outreach Support in NY. This was not for ESF#11 but rather ESF#15 seeking a specific USDA employee, who already was deployed.

On November 3 FR2 RRCC went back to Watch status and the non-FEMA ESFs provided day shift coverage. With the NRCC assuming the operations, most of the FR2 FEMA RRCC staff were sent to conduct Community Relations work out in the impacted areas. Transition to Joint Field Offices (JFOs) were proposed to take place the following week; but were on hold with an impending Nor'easter storm for midweek. The ESFs remained at the RRCC which went back up to a level I.

There was a FR2 Mass Care for NY request for two Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) subject matter experts to staff at the NY State EOC. The ESF#11 Coordinator worked the request with FNS regional office.

Because NY and NJ were equally impacted, the ESF#11 Coordinator requested that the FEMA Region 1 ESF#11 Coordinator provide support to NY and transition to the NY JFO. The ESF#11 Coordinator for FR2 would remain with the RRCC and provide support to NJ then transition to the NJ JFO. The Nor'easter "Winter storm Athena" impacted the NY and NJ November 7-8, with heavy wet snow accumulated on trees and roads throughout the region, impacting travel and response. Due to the storm impact many of the ESFs for safety reasons overnighted at the FR2 RRCC until the following day.

The FR1 ESF#11 Coordinator deployed to the NY JFO on Sunday November 11 to assume the duties of ESF#11 under Mission Assignment 4085DR-NY. The FR2 ESF#11 Coordinator was slated to deploy to the NJ JFO under MA 4086DR-NJ. It was then decided the NJ JFO did not require ESF#11 at the JFO. The FR2 ESF#11 Coordinator demobilized from the RRCC on November 10 but continued to monitor state and federal activities to provide coordination and situational awareness regarding resource requests. ESF#11 continued to coordinate with FNS, State feeding program contacts, NGOs, State and Federal Mass Care to provide requested supplemental feeding resources to integrate into State Mass Care feeding responses. The FNS SMEs in NY contacted partner agencies and provided requested information to FEMA Mass Care and participate in state and federal meeting and calls, until they were demobilized on November 16. The FR1 ESF#11 Coordinator coordinated with the NY state and federal partners on requests for information; support for debris management; supplemental nutrition assistance, etc., until being demobilized.

FEMA Region I: October 24, several days before projected landfall the FEMA Region I (FR1) RRCC director identified a need to possibly provide staffing to six FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) plus the FR1 RRCC with ESF representatives. The ESF#11 Coordinator reached out to all ESF#11 desk officers and requested that AC subject matter experts be available from AC Eastern Region Emergency Response Program Manager. The ESF#11 Coordinator reported to FR1 RRCC on October 29. The only IMAT ESF#11 requests that materialized was the FEMA IMAT at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) requested someone from ESF#11 to address debris issues within Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) quarantine area. The ESF#11 Coordinator worked with a Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) collateral duty Desk Officer who was from the ALB Program, and coordinated her assignment to the FEMA IMAT at MEMA. The FR1 ESF#11 effort was demobilized October 31. November 11-19 the FR1 ESF#11 Coordinator deployed to the NY JFO as described above.

FEMA Region IV and V: Both ESF#11 Coordinators were alerted for potential activation by their respective FEMA Regions. They both participated in planning efforts and meetings, but ultimately neither were activated by a FEMA Mission Assignment.

An ESF#11 After Action Review meeting was held in Riverdale with participation from the Federal Partners and other participants December 11, 2012.

Lessons Learned

What Went Well

- 1) Despite the confusion and uncertainty inherent in any multi state disaster, plus added confusion from shifting FEMA initiatives, the ESF#11 Coordinators performed superbly, in some case under considerable pressure from weather and over excited individuals.
- 2) ESF#11 coordination regionally with other APHIS programs and Federal Partners enabled an effective response.
- 3) Food and Nutrition Service and APHIS program ESF#11 staffing support was vital.

Challenges/Areas for Improvement

- 1) FEMA implementing procedures that were different from past responses and exercises added confusion. The proactive nature of FEMA continued to expand, from a “Lean Forward” posture to a “Go Big, Go Fast” perspective.
- 2) Conflicting information caused by personnel at the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) unfamiliar with their role or working separately added confusion and resulted in different actions being initiated at the FEMA Region, or NRCC levels. There was confusion over national and State level roles and incident response. Actions were taken outside of Mission Assignments at the NRCC. Efforts at the NRCC to conduct a parallel response with separate calls to states and reporting hindered the response.
- 3) The need for effective coordination at the national level was reinforced, emphasizing the importance of the ESF#11 National Coordinator to ensure efforts assist state response. The National Coordinator can help guide NRCC actions consistent with the National Incident Management System principle of state managed response. A variety of actions were initiated from the NRCC in the name of ESF#11 that were not related to state requests and complicated the ESF#11 response.