

Key Responsibilities in Emergency Response Communication

[Music begins]

Narrator: As you continue your disaster preparedness planning process, you'll want to coordinate with the emergency response system in your local area. It is important to understand the various levels of responsibility that are part of this multi-tiered system. At the local level, as a Head Start program, you are responsible for assessing risk and developing a disaster management plan.

This includes training staff and drilling on emergency procedures. Also at the local level are first responders, police, fire, and emergency medical services. You should build relationships with and include representatives of these important services in your disaster planning. Depending on the nature of the disaster, your local or tribal government may play a role in disaster response and recovery. State offices of emergency services, public safety, and public health will all play a role in state-wide strategic planning for potential natural disasters.

Finally, at the federal level, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, steps in when a governor formally declares a state of emergency. FEMA provides many supportive services in the event of a natural disaster. You will also need to keep in touch with your federal funders through the Regional Office of Head Start, informing them about the safety of staff and children and the status of program operations. Communication protocols will prove critical throughout your response to a natural disaster as you strive to keep children and staff safe, and your facility functioning.