

Collect Resources and Assess Facility Vulnerabilities

John Mathews: I'm going to introduce you today to the PMFO guide, Natural Disasters and Head Start Facilities. That guide covers eight natural disasters. But in the interest of time, this webinar will focus on just two – hurricanes and tornadoes – as examples of how you can use the guide to help prepare your facilities for natural disasters.

Let's now delve into the risk assessment mindset and how you use the knowledge of these risks to approach planning and organizing your response to potential disasters. Knowing when disasters begin – due to seasonal changes as floods, drought, hurricanes, lightning – will help give you time to properly plan and prepare your Head Start program to respond to an impending natural disaster.

Climate change and the long-term fluctuations in ocean temperatures and solar radiance are affecting communities that never saw floods or wildfires or tornadoes before. In this chart, we see that thunderstorms, tornadoes, and resulting floods dominate weather patterns in the United States in the spring. In the summer, the most active season for natural disasters is caused by seasonal fluctuations, including wildfires, thunderstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. In the fall, drought begins to come in. Wildfires and hurricanes are the dominant natural disasters. In the winter, we see extremely cold temperatures, snow, ice, blizzards in the north with dangerous wind chills. While in the south, snow and ice are becoming more common. However, thunderstorms and tornadoes have been experienced year-round, including in January, and we're going to talk about one that hit Selma, Alabama this past January.

This is, in general terms, the seasonal effects of natural disasters that you can anticipate and plan around. We'll get into more detail-specific geographical information that you can evaluate on what exactly your community might experience on a seasonal basis.

The new Facility Disaster Preparedness Guide developed by the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations, PMFO – that's a mouthful – is available on ECLKC. You can search for it in three ways. The first way, we're talking facilities. Go to the topic menu on the top right of ECLKC and select “facilities.” It'll be the first thing that pops up. The second way to find it is on the ECLKC search menu – top right corner. Just begin to type natural disaster and you won't get three letters into it, and the guide will pop up. The other way is to Google search it – “natural disasters and Head Start” – and it'll be in the top three of your Google search. The important key phrase there is “natural disaster and Head Start.”

The guide begins with the process of forming a disaster management team that conducts all the planning activities outlined in the guide. It takes the user through various process steps to prepare, respond, and recover before, during, and after a natural disaster. It acts as a companion guide, emergency preparedness manual, developed by the National Center on Health, Behavior Health, and Safety.

Now, I'm going to walk you through some of the pages of the guide to familiarize you with it, not to delve into any detail. In the ... You open up the guide by clicking on it. On the left, you have a table of contents, which you can remove with this hamburger up here. In the introduction to Planning, we look at the eight steps that we recommend as part of your planning process: forming a disaster management team; having that team evaluate the likeliest natural disasters that could hit your program; from that, determining the risks to your facility by doing a facility assessment; examining your communication systems; inventory your resources; compile a risk assessment report, which compiles all of this information collected by the team; then preparing what we call a hazard mitigation report. It's really a capital plan. From this assessment report, you can develop a capital plan with cost estimates that support funding applications, the 1303. The last thing is you develop the plan itself, which encompasses all of this additional information.

I'm going to play ... We have five videos. We have time to play one of these. I'll play it for you now.

[Video begins]

[Music]

Hello. Today I wanted to discuss how to complete a facility risk assessment that will make your Head Start facility more resilient during natural disasters and better protect children and staff. First, form a disaster management team. A broad cross-section of expertise can help you assess potential risks and identify steps to make your facility more resilient. While some hazards are more likely than others, all can cause significant amounts of damage. Use FEMA resources to help you identify the most likely natural disasters in your area. Whether you plan to evacuate or remain in the building during an event, you want it to remain structurally intact, so the third step is to assess facilities strengths and vulnerabilities.

A communications hub at your facility can streamline operations during an emergency. You will need to review your communication systems and develop protocols to maintain contact. Mutual aid agreements, insurance policies, and emergency supplies are crucial as your program responds to and recovers from a natural disaster.

Be proactive and catalog all of your emergency resources. Compile all of your findings in a comprehensive risk assessment report. This report will help you prepare your facilities to protect children and staff during a natural disaster. Always, hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

[Music]

[Video ends]

I don't know who that avatar is. Ut kind of looks like me, but it has too much gray hair. Going on in the guide, Types of Natural Disasters, there's a couple of important resources in this guide.

One is this FEMA resource, a national risk index map. If you click on that, you can pull up a map of the United States with all the counties highlighted. FEMA and your state emergency management associations got together to identify the most likeliest natural disaster risks in all the counties in the United States.

Here we'll click on an example of Tampa, Florida in Hillsboro County in Tampa, Florida. If we click on this "Create a Report," it'll create a report for us that shows us, from a community level, the kind of damage that could occur, the value of that damage. But it's directly relatable to an individual facility like a Head Start center. We see that in the Tampa area, hurricane, tornado, lightning are very high risk. Wildfires and drought are relatively high. Landslides are relatively moderate. Your disaster management team can use this information to help them assess the specific risks in your locations.

I'm going to move on quickly to tornadoes in this guide. We have ... Each section of the eight sections provides you with information on the classifications, the alert systems, the effects of the storms. Here, we talk about emergency shelters, safe rooms that we'll get into later in the presentation, and checklists.

Here you'll have your checklists. Then you pull up the checklist and go down through what your facility needs to have to survive or be resilient towards a tornado. You can take this away from you today and then assess. Now, this is another tornado tracking map that is available within the guide. This one allows you to have a little bit more specific information on tornadoes that might have struck your area that you can use in your evaluation of risk.

This is the second one. This one allows you to click on the size of tornadoes to help you evaluate, and also the year if you want to select a smaller range. However, going back to 1950 is a 70-year range of tornadoes. And if you're in a new or moderately aged building, you very well might get 75 more years out of that building so that knowing what happened for 70 years in the past tells you what will happen for 70 years in the future. With climate change, your risks become greater, so it's a good resource for you.

Also in tornadoes, we have a link for FEMA safe room design for tornadoes and hurricanes. Remember, there may be FEMA funding available if you're in a state that's been declared a natural disaster. Step three, it goes down through determining facility risks.

There's another checklist form here. This is a very comprehensive checklist for assessing your facility. You would use this in a longer-term strategy with a consultant, with an architect-engineer, to go into a detailed assessment of your facility and its ability to withstand the risk that you've identified. Then, step six is an example of compiling a risk assessment report. We give you an outline and we talk about that. I think that's about all I want to cover on that.