



FEMA

DEC 07 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: All FEMA Employees

FROM:  W. Craig Fugate
Administrator

SUBJECT: Support for Change to Stafford Act; Tribal Governments

Under the direction of President Obama and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, I am pleased to announce our support for amending the Stafford Act to allow federally recognized Tribal governments to directly request emergency and major declarations from the President. A legislative change to the Stafford Act would allow a Tribal government to *choose* whether to directly request a separate declaration or to receive assistance, as they do presently, under a declaration for a State.

Tribal members are an essential part of the emergency management team, and amending the law will enhance our working relationship with Tribal governments and improve emergency and disaster responsiveness throughout Indian Country. We look forward to actively working with our Tribal partners and members of Congress to support and facilitate the passage of such a change in the law.

FEMA, under the leadership of this administration, has committed to strengthening its engagement with American Indians and Alaska Natives, to better support Tribal governments and Indian Country as we work to build more resilient and better prepared communities.

FEMA has implemented regulations and policies that, once a disaster or emergency has been declared under the Stafford Act, allow federally recognized tribes to choose to become a direct grantee under FEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.

As part of these efforts to work with Tribal governments directly, during the past year, and as part of our continued commitment, FEMA has designated Tribal liaisons in each of the regional offices that engage with Tribal governments, and hired an attorney who is educated, trained, and experienced in federal Indian law and emergency management to better support Tribes before, during and after an emergency or disaster strikes. This has allowed us to more closely coordinate with Tribes, and make sure they have the support they need while planning, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters.