



Disaster Housing: Supporting Recovery Needs Using Short-Term and Long-Term Strategies

-After a disaster, FEMA is tasked with the mission of immediately supporting the impacted state(s) to provide recovery assistance, with housing as a primary focus. Primary solutions enacted by FEMA have included Manufactured Housing Units (MHUs), Temporary Transportable Housing Units (TTHUs), either on residential sites or in congregate community settings; vouchers issued for lodging in hotels, motels or apartments; providing funds directly to residents in an effort to allow them to seek out the most viable sheltering solutions; and the enactment of the Shelter and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) program, more commonly known as a Rapid Repair Program.

-A "Rapid Repair Program" is an impactful option in returning residents to their homes in a very short timeframe, and as important in America's COVID environment, promoting "sheltering in place" ***drastically reduces the risk of COVID spread by keeping residents away from congregate shelters.***

-Rapid Repair program goals are to provide immediate, necessary, and temporary repairs to homes to allow for maximum sheltering in place. This program restores damaged structures at a reasonable cost, providing a safe and relatively immediate housing solution.

-For maximum effectiveness, FEMA should require the creation of "pre-positioned" contracts at all levels of government with the purpose of immediately activating pre-approved and qualified contractors. This proactive, critical step will often reduce pre-construction timeframes by months using already in-place contracts, whereby lengthy procurement steps can be avoided post-disaster.

-Overall benefits of a Rapid Repair Program:

Speed: Rapid repair functions are much faster than the typical timeframe for procuring and installing manufactured housing or temporary housing units. Crews can be on-site within days after an event implementing repairs in a matter of hours to only several days, which ultimately can return hundreds or thousands of affected residents to their homes almost immediately.

Volume: A Rapid Repair program exhibits volumes of repaired homes unmatched by any other alternative. In New York City's Rapid Repair Program, over 10,000 homes were repaired in a four-month timeframe, and in Puerto Rico, 108,000 homes were repaired in a twelve-month period. This level of volume is unmatched in alternative dwelling unit replacement scenarios.

Resource Efficiency: In situations such as haul and install, multiple parties are involved in the required supply, transportation, installation and maintenance execution chain. One issue can cause a chain reaction leading to extended timeframes or even failure. Rapid Repair is concentrated and controllable with a tight stage of performance, a more controlled logistics framework and the cross utilization of dedicated crews who exhibit high degrees of well-defined performance.

Less Displacement: Rapid repair promotes sheltering in place, which means survivors are able to return to their homes and their communities much faster, eliminating residents from relocating to a new area that can further destroy economic, environmental and human stability. Residents who can stay in the affected area are a critical factor to promoting expedited recovery, which promotes a more rapid return to community stability and resident buy-in for recovery and restoration efforts.



Versatility: Rapid Repair can be implemented regardless of location, density or access where multiple challenges are inherent that prohibit temporary housing units, rendering these solutions difficult to execute. In a dedicated program such as this, unknown circumstances preventing recovery are mitigated, which leads to increased construction velocity and more efficient utilization of resources.

Cost: Using pre-positioned contracts, costs can be determined upfront with a relative degree of certainty once post-disaster construction commences. The only factors attributing to cost deltas are resource availability and supply logistics, which cannot be known until after the disaster. However, by providing a pre-positioned base cost structure, unnecessary price gouging in procurement efforts can be avoided from contractors taking advantage of the post-disaster environment.

The intent of the Rapid Repair program is not to provide permanent restoration of a housing unit. Rather, survivors can return home in a SAFE, SANITARY and SECURE environment, while permanent measures such as insurance payouts, disaster loans, CDBG programs or other alternatives are secured and implemented.

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