

## **Emergency Management History**

The Congressional Act of 1803 is considered the first piece of disaster legislation. It provided one New Hampshire town with assistance after an extensive fire. In the century that followed, ad hoc legislation was passed more than 100 times in response to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and other disaster.

In the 1930s, when the federal approach to problems became popular, the Reconstruction Corporation was given authority to make disaster loans for repair and reconstruction of certain public facilities following an earthquake, and later, other types of disasters. In 1934, the Bureau of Public Road was given authority to provide funding for highways and bridges damaged by natural disasters. The Flood Control Act in 1936 created the National Flood Program. It established a federal responsibility to assist in flooding mitigation programs along the Mississippi River and other major rivers.

During the 1940s, Civil Defense programs, such as air raid warning and emergency shelter systems were established to protect the civilian population.

The Disaster Relief Act of 1950 gave the president authority to issue disaster declarations, authorizing federal agencies to provide direct assistance to state and local governments.

The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 created a nationwide system of civil defense agencies, and defense drill became routine in schools, government agencies and other organizations. The Federal Civil Defense Act was amended to include state government responsibility.

Massive disaster during the 1960s and 1970s required major federal response and recovery operations by the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, which was a division established within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Hurricane Carla in 1962, Hurricane Betsy in 1965, Hurricane Camille in 1969, Hurricane Agnes in 1972, the Alaska Earthquake in 1964 and the Southern California Earthquake in 1971 all served to focus attention on the issue of natural disasters and brought about increased legislation.

The Disaster Relief Act in 1969 created a federal coordinating officer to represent the president in the relief effort. Extended in 1974, the Act authorized individual and family assistance through state and local government.

In 1978, the National Governor's Association sought to decrease the number of agencies with whom state and local governments were forced to work. They asked President Jimmy Carter to centralize federal emergency functions.

President Carter's 1979 executive order merged many of the separate disaster-related responsibilities into a new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Among other agencies, FEMA absorbed: the Federal Insurance Administration, the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration, the National Weather Service Community

Preparedness Program, the Federal Preparedness Agency of the General Services Administration and the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration activities from HUD. Civil defense responsibilities were also transferred to the new agency from the Defense Department's Civil Preparedness Agency.

In March 2003, FEMA along with 22 other agencies, programs and office became the Department of Homeland Security. This new department, headed by Secretary Tom Ridge, brought a coordinated approach to national security from emergencies and disaster - both natural and man-made.

In New Jersey, Emergency Management falls under the direction of the New Jersey State Police. The state is divided into three regions, North, Central and South. Each county is assigned a representative from the State Police. Warren County is in the North region.

Each municipality, by law, must appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator and a Local Emergency Planning Council. Every Coordinator is responsible for writing and maintaining an all hazards emergency operations plan.

The Town of Phillipsburg is in compliance.