

Appendix K: Mitigation Assessment Teams (MATs)

Should PBC be impacted by a natural disaster deemed by FEMA to be of national significance, teams of technical specialists, referred to as Mitigation Assessment Teams (MATs), might be mobilized by FEMA, in conjunction with State and local officials, to conduct on-site qualitative engineering analyses to assess damage to government offices, homes, hospitals, schools businesses, critical facilities and other structures and infrastructure. The purpose of the assessment would be to determine the causes of structural failures (or successes) and to evaluate the adequacy of local building codes, practices, and construction materials for the purpose of improving future performance. They also might use the opportunity to review the effectiveness of previous mitigation projects.

Most frequently, MATs would be mobilized by FEMA's Directorate in response to joint federal, state, and local requests for technical support.

The technical make-up of MATs will depend largely on the nature and extent of damage incurred. Disciplines most commonly represented are likely to include: civil and coastal engineering, hydraulics, architecture, construction, and building code development and enforcement. If the damage is severe, representatives from FEMA Headquarters, Regional Office engineers, representatives from other Federal agencies and academia, and experts from the design and construction industry may also participate. State representatives would be dispatched by the FDEM Mitigation Bureau. The County would be expected to provide local team members and support services as defined below.

At the county level, during activations, the Operations Section Chief will be responsible for coordinating with the Logistics Section to arrange for local personnel, equipment, vehicles, data, and other resources necessary to support MAT assessments. Once staffed and equipped, MAT activities will be closely supported by the Damage Assessment and Impact Assessment Units of the Operations Section under the direction of the Operations Section Chief. Most likely FEMA and State representatives will bring personal resources such as laptop computers, cell phones, GPS, etc. with them in their Go Bags, however, backup inventories and sources for local resources will be maintained.

According to NIMS/ICS task force guidelines, federal and state MATs may choose to coordinate their activities with local law enforcement homeland security units who commonly perform critical infrastructure and key resource (CI/KR) field assessments within the County. This temporary disaster response task force may also include special operations personnel from the fire service as necessary. Non-sensitive information from local law enforcement's established database will be shared to the fullest extent possible with the MATs. Any exchange of information associated with this initiative will be limited so as not to compromise local law enforcement's tactical or strategic capabilities or the region's efforts in CI/KR programs in support of the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP).

Lists of needed resources will be prepared by the Operations Manager and given to the Logistics Manager who will be responsible for maintaining the inventories at the EOC or other PBC facilities and ensuring equipment is secured, available, and ready for deployment. Access to special or emergency resources beyond the working inventory, may be available through the Purchasing Unit, through the ESF18 (Business & Industry) functions at the regional and state levels, through WebEOC source lists, or through private sector partners party to the [Business Continuity Information Network \(BCIN\)](#). The BCIN is a web-based service available to local businesses, county emergency management, and organizations that assist

businesses to gather and share critical information that support continuity efforts before, during and after a disaster. Available year round as a public service, this trusted, business-to-business, community network provides participating companies a tool to track their key employees and supply chain status, and locate needed recovery goods and services.

The County will provide appropriate public sector and private sector technical, operational, logistical, administrative, and planning expertise necessary to support the mitigation assessment mission. The Logistics Section will maintain lists of emergency contacts.

Depending on the geographic distribution and severity of damage throughout the PBC, the MAT might establish its base(s) of operation at the EOC or at sites near any or all of the six Emergency Operating Areas (EOAs).

The MATs may work in conjunction with Damage Assessment Teams or independently, based on need, time priorities and the availability of State and FEMA MAT personnel.

The mission of the MATs is to learn exactly what happened and why, and how to reduce disaster damage in the future. Key questions include:

- How did buildings perform?
- Did winds exceed building codes?
- Did flood damages go beyond special flood hazard areas?
- Were building codes followed and enforced?
- Were construction materials sufficient to withstand wind and water damages?
- Were protective measures such as shutters used?
- Were local, State, and Federal building standards and ordinances sufficient?

PBC is the largest county by area in the U.S. east of the Mississippi River. Most of its population and development are heavily concentrated in the eastern corridor within 12 miles of the coastline. The County's emergency management planning is based on the assumption that the County may not be serviced effectively by a single EOC location. Consequently, the County has been divided into six Emergency Operations Areas, each of which is equipped to function on its own before, during and after a disaster. Pre-equipped field response trailers are available for deployment year round. Where lead times are sufficient, resources will be pre-staged. Mitigation assessment resources may not be available for all EOAs concurrently, in which case the Operations Section Chief will work with the MAT to identify priorities and will request additional resources through Logistics.

If available local personnel resources are insufficient, the County may be able to draw mutual aid support from neighboring counties on an as needed basis. The Logistics and Operations Sections may also coordinate with FDEM, as necessary and appropriate, to arrange for field support from organizations such as the International Code Council.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of assessment data compiled in the field, the teams will prepare recommendations regarding construction codes and standards, building design, and best practices that PBC, its municipalities and the construction industry can use to reduce future disaster damage. Throughout the process, the MAT will consult with partnering government agencies and supporting private sector

organizations to ensure consensus on each phase of the investigation, including methodology, data collection, and analysis. This will help to ensure the MAT's final recommendations represent the most current and best available data and technical expertise. Once consensus is reached, FEMA will issue a series of "Recovery Advisories" that will provide initial guidance on building issues and best practices that can be used in the reconstruction process. FEMA will also publish a comprehensive report that provides local decision makers with information and detailed technical recommendations for improving building construction and design, building code policy and enforcement, and mitigation activities that can limit or eliminate damages in future disasters.

MAT observations and recommendations submitted to the LMS will provide a basis for future mitigation strategies, initiatives, and projects and the optimum uses of mitigation assistance funds.

The DEM recovery branch will provide oversight. The recovery and post-disaster coordinator from the recovery branch along with the LMS Coordinator will facilitate and coordinate the application process and serve as a primary communication link with funding agencies.

Public information will be coordinated through the Joint Information Center (managed by ESF- 14), based on cleared information provided by the MATs and Disaster Recovery Centers. Longer-term, information will be integrated into media releases, LMS and CRS outreach activities, public presentations, presentations at professional conferences, training curricula, etc.

Mitigation assessment activities are integral to assessing the mitigation program. DEM coordinates with the Inspections Section of the County's Building Department regarding these. Many of the 39 municipalities of the County have their own building departments, officials, and procedures and will be an important part of future procedure development processes. Several of these departments can draw from their damage assessment experiences following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, and their experiences following Hurricane Irma in 2017, which affected PBC. Organizations such as the PBC Builder's Association and the Building Code Advisory Board of PBC may also be consulted regarding these activities.