

Public Law 93-288: The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act

Overview

Public Law 93-288 (PL 93-288) provides the authority for the Federal government to respond to disasters and emergencies in order to provide assistance to save lives and protect public health, safety, and property. Under PL 93-288, the President is authorized to:

- Establish a program of disaster preparedness that uses services of all appropriate agencies;
- Make grants to states, upon their request, for the development of plans and programs for disaster preparedness and prevention; and
- Ensure that all appropriate Federal agencies are prepared to issue warnings of disasters to state and local officials.

Title III: Disaster Assistance Administration

PL 93-288 gives the President the authority to declare that an emergency or a major disaster exists, provided that the governor of the affected state(s) has requested a declaration. Title III authorizes the President to:

- Direct any Federal agency, with or without reimbursement, to use its available personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, and other resources in support of state and local disaster assistance efforts;
- Appoint a Federal Coordinating Officer to operate in the affected area; and
- Form emergency support teams of Federal personnel to be deployed in an area affected by a major disaster or emergency to assist the Federal Coordinating Officer.

Title III also sets forth authorized forms of assistance to be given in a major disaster or emergency area.

Title IV: Federal Disaster Assistance Programs

In addition, PL 93-288 also allows the President to authorize any Federal agency to repair or reconstruct any federally owned facility that is damaged or destroyed by any major disaster. The President may:

- Make contributions to state or local governments to help repair or reconstruct public facilities, as well as issue grants to help repair or reconstruct private nonprofit educational, utility, emergency, medical, and custodial care facilities;
- Provide, either by purchase or lease, temporary housing for those who require it as a result of a major disaster;
- Provide assistance on a temporary basis in the form of mortgage or rental payments to or on behalf of those who, as a result of financial hardship caused by a major disaster, have received written notice of dispossession or eviction;

- Make grants to states for the purpose of state-issued grants to individuals or families to meet disaster-related necessary expenses or serious needs; and
- Make loans to any local government that suffers a substantial loss of tax and other revenues as a result of a major disaster, has demonstrated a need for financial assistance, and sets forth the procedures for administration of such loans.

Additional relief programs for major disaster areas, including distribution of food coupons and food commodities, relocation assistance, legal services, crisis counseling assistance and training, emergency communications, emergency public transportation, and fire suppression grants also are provided for under the Stafford Act.

Title V: Economic Recovery for Disaster Areas

A state governor may request assistance from the President for economic recovery under this act, provided that the governor designates a Recovery Planning Council for such area. The purpose of this council is to provide cooperative planning for development, restoration of employment base, and continued coordination of Federal aid programs for long-range restoration and rehabilitation of normal commercial, industrial, and other economic activities. PL 93-288 authorizes the President to provide funds to any Recovery Planning Council as well as authorizes the appropriation of not in excess of \$250 million to carry out the provisions of this title.

Title VI: Miscellaneous

PL 93-288 also authorizes the President to prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary and proper to carry out any of the provisions of this Act.