



Best Practices for HBAs Responding to Natural Disasters

Home Building Associations (HBAs) play an essential role in helping members and the community respond to and recover from natural disasters. The following best practices can help local and state HBAs effectively respond to hurricanes, floods, and other extreme weather events. By providing this critical support, HBAs can reinforce their value and capabilities to their members and neighbors.

Consider the following ways HBAs can step in and help when disasters strike:

1. **Reach out to your members.** After a disaster, contact your membership as soon as it is safe to do so through emails, online surveys, in-person events or phone calls. Check-in with them to ensure their safety and ask about any hardships they may be experiencing personally or professionally. In addition, ask your members about their plans to participate in repairing or rebuilding projects in the coming weeks. You can then share the list of members with home owners looking for assistance.
2. **Become an informational resource for the community.** Many residents impacted by a natural disaster have never built or remodeled a home before and may need help knowing where to start. Unfortunately, outdated or incorrect information often spreads throughout the community following a disaster. After a disaster, your HBA can serve as a resource for reputable information to help home owners recover by providing warnings about scam contractors and accurate information or tips about rebuilding. Social media posts, media placements, radio public service announcements or handouts at in-person events are among the most successful communication outreach strategies.
3. **Create a disaster page on your website.** A dedicated disaster resources page on your website can help home owners find rebuilding or repairing information online in one central location. If your HBA has a publicly available member directory, make sure you link to it on the page so home owners can reach out directly to your members. Keep the information evergreen on your website to serve as a reference guide for your community if another disaster should occur.
4. **Send a press release to your local media.** Distribute a press release to your local media soon after the disaster, warning your community of unscrupulous contractors and providing tips on how to avoid scams. Typically, media outlets pick up these releases after events which helps amplify your HBA message throughout the community. Ensure your press release includes contact information for your HBA, including your association's website address. Before distributing a press release, designate a spokesperson for your HBA to fulfill interview requests and provide talking points.

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Your spokesperson must be comfortable sharing clear and consistent messages with the media. NAHB's Media Relations team can provide your HBA with tips for working with the press and contact information for local reporters.

5. **Collect and distribute important information to your members.** Following a disaster, delays, supply shortages, or regulatory changes may disrupt your member's daily business operations. In addition, local, state, and federal aid programs applicable to your members may be available. Your HBA can fill a significant role with its membership by collecting and disseminating aid application information and other timely, relevant disaster-related information. Make sure to distribute information regularly, so members can count on your HBA as the go-to resource for updates.
6. **Identify the needs to support your community.** The key to responding to any disaster is assessing needs and developing and implementing solutions. Needs will vary widely depending on the scope and scale of the disaster, the community impacted, and the resources available. To conduct a needs assessment, HBAs must seek to understand the barriers facing their membership and community and then tailor solutions or resources to overcome the challenges. For example, HBAs can educate local officials on specific post-disaster construction impediments or engage in philanthropic efforts to support an under-resourced community.
7. **Form a local disaster task force.** Disasters can strain an HBA's operational capacity due to a direct impact or an increased workload. To help allocate time and resources effectively, work with your leadership to set up a task force of members to recommend actions and develop solutions in response to the disaster. These members can attend community meetings, provide disaster updates to the HBA, or support outreach and events. Depending on the size and scale of the disaster, the task force can range from a single volunteer to a large committee with multiple subcommittees working on different fronts.
8. **Participate in recovery meetings and meet with local officials.** In any community, HBAs represent the building industry and serve as the experts in residential construction. After a disaster, local leaders begin conversations about repairing or rebuilding damaged homes. Reach out and meet with local officials when these conversations start to ensure that local industry professionals are consulted to provide guidance on any proposed processes or policies related to residential construction. Also consider participating in locally formed long term groups or committees focused on community rebuilding and recovery efforts.



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9. **Partner with a 501c (3) non-profit organization.** Recovery after disasters takes a whole community approach, with many different partners collaborating to meet the needs of those affected. No one organization can meet all the needs of the community following a disaster. Organizations have various capabilities and serve different populations within the community. The best action is to partner with and work through an established 501c (3) non-profit with disaster response, rebuilding or grantmaking expertise. Partnership activities can include collecting donations, connecting HBA members to volunteer work, or providing grant funding for disaster projects. Some HBAs might already be affiliated with a 501c (3) within their organizational structure. These HBAs can work with the leadership of the non-profit to explore opening up a disaster fund to collect donations or making grants to other organizations.

10. **Host a community support event.** In-person events such as community rebuilding presentations, member support expos, volunteer days, grant-making events, or donation distributions can engage members and support the community. Events provide an opportunity to partner with local municipalities and groups, demonstrating the home building industry's commitment to the community.

After disasters, the residential construction industry and HBAs support more than building homes. HBAs stand together with survivors to rebuild communities. They are stronger together. For more information, guides, and resources on responding to a natural disaster, visit nahb.org/disaster.