Department of Homeland Security

Office of Inspector General

FEMA's Initial Response to the Colorado Flood

OIG-14-111-D

July 2014

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Department of Homeland Security

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph L. Nimmich
Associate Administrator, Response and Recovery
Federal Emergency Management Agency

FROM: John V. Kelly
Assistant Inspector General
Office of Emergency Management Oversight

SUBJECT: *FEMA's Initial Response to the Colorado Flood*
FEMA Disaster Number 4145-DR-CO
Audit Report Number OIG-14-111-D

Attached for your information is our final letter report, *FEMA's Initial Response to the Colorado Flood.* We audited the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) initial response to the Colorado Flood from September 2013 to February 2014. We discussed the results of this audit with FEMA officials during the course of the audit and provided a discussion draft report to them on May 1, 2014. The report contains no recommendations; therefore, we consider it closed.

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act,* we will provide copies of our report to appropriate congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the report on our website for public dissemination.

Major contributors to this report are Humberto Melara, Director; Devin Polster, Audit Manager; Connie Tan, Auditor; and Victor Du, Auditor.

Please call me with any questions at (202) 254-4100, or your staff may contact Tonda L. Hadley, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audit Services, Office of Emergency Management Oversight, at 214-436-5200.

Attachment

Background

Without warning, a severe storm system significantly impacted 18 Colorado counties between September 11–12, 2013, with record-breaking precipitation along the Colorado Front Range from Larimer and Weld Counties, and southward to El Paso County.

Figure 1. Disaster damage; Jamestown, Colorado
Source: FEMA

At one point, more than 30 State highways or interstates were closed because of infrastructure damage or water-inundated highways. The State of Colorado estimated that damage costs to roadways and bridges amounted to $475 million. The disaster damaged 16,101 residential structures and destroyed 1,882. First responders evacuated 18,147 residents—airlifting hundreds to safety. Disaster casualties consisted of 218 injuries and 10 deaths.

The President declared an expedited Emergency Declaration (EM-3365) on September 12, 2013, which authorized FEMA to provide emergency services to supplement State and local efforts. The President signed a Major Disaster Declaration (DR-4145) on September 14, 2013, which authorized FEMA to support State and local response and begin recovery efforts. The incident period for the disaster (Colorado Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides, DR-4145) was September 11−30, 2013. (In this report, we refer to the disaster as the Colorado Flood.)

Results of Audit

FEMA provided an effective and efficient initial response to the Colorado Flood. FEMA quickly responded to the disaster, overcame a multitude of oftentimes significant challenges, engaged in a variety of successful disaster-related sourcing activities, and productively coordinated with its Federal, State, and local partners.

FEMA Quickly Responded to the Colorado Flood

FEMA officials quickly responded to the Colorado Flood following the President's September 12, 2013, Emergency Declaration by rapidly mobilizing and deploying its Incident Management Assistance Team. Upon the President's Major Disaster Declaration on September 14, 2013, FEMA officials established both an Initial Operating Facility and Incident Support Base, and responded to requests for Individual Assistance.

Incident Management Assistance Team

The Emergency Declaration on September 12 prompted FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Team West to monitor the events of the disaster and prepare for deployment.[1] FEMA subsequently activated the team based on the Level II categorization of the disaster.[2]

The team arrived at the State's Emergency Operations Center on September 13, and worked with State emergency management officials to accomplish priorities the Governor had identified. Within 5 days of deployment, the team opened a Joint Field Office, Federal Staging Area, and three Disaster Recovery Centers.[3]

Initial Operating Facility

FEMA opened its Initial Operating Facility on September 14—the same day that the President issued the Major Disaster Declaration. Incident Management Assistance Team members working out of the facility supported command staff at the State Emergency Operations Center. Together, they established a unified command and provided situational awareness for decision-makers to determine the level and type of immediate

[1] Incident Management Assistance Teams are full-time, rapid-response teams with dedicated staff able to deploy within 2 hours and arrive at an incident within 12 hours to support the local incident commander.
[2] A Level II disaster contains moderate levels and breadth of damage that will likely result in a Presidential declaration with moderate Federal assistance.
[3] FEMA establishes and manages Disaster Recovery Centers in centralized locations within or near the disaster area for disaster survivors to apply for disaster assistance.

Federal support required. This coordination effectively resulted in staffing over 500 FEMA personnel by September 15; and, by September 17, about 40 State emergency management officials and 25 officials from other Federal agencies were performing various response and recovery activities.

Incident Support Base

FEMA quickly identified and established an Incident Support Base at Colorado's Buckley U.S. Air Force Base.[4] FEMA transported commodities from its distribution center in Fort Worth, Texas, and staged them at this base (see *Commodities,* p. 8). The base also served as an initial site for rescue, supply transport, and aerial surveillance assignments. FEMA named the base as the official Federal Staging Area for commodities on September 15.

Response to Requests for Individual Assistance

FEMA effectively responded to requests for Individual Assistance.[5] By September 17, 3 days after the major disaster declaration, FEMA registered close to 9,000 individuals for Individual Assistance; at the same time, over 100 FEMA housing inspectors were in the field conducting inspections. On September 18, FEMA opened three Disaster Recovery Centers in the most affected counties of Boulder, Larimer, and Weld. On the following day, FEMA opened a fourth Disaster Recovery Center and staffed two county-run assistance centers.

By December 20, 2013, FEMA had—

- registered approximately 28,348 individuals for assistance;
- inspected nearly 26,000 damaged properties;
- welcomed more than 21,500 survivors at 26 State/Federal Disaster Recovery Centers for one-on-one briefings related to available assistance; and
- granted $53,816,716 for housing needs.

[4] An Incident Support Base is a temporary Federal site for positioning resources to be assigned and transferred to State or local points of distribution.

[5] FEMA provides disaster assistance—financial or direct assistance—to individuals whose property the disaster has damaged or destroyed (when insurance does not cover losses). This assistance is for helping survivors with critical expenses they cannot cover in other ways. FEMA does not intend this assistance to always restore damaged property to a pre-disaster condition.

FEMA Overcame a Variety of Response and Recovery Challenges

FEMA performed well at managing the initial response and recovery challenges of the Colorado Flood. During the first 30 days, the most pressing challenges related to (1) staffing, (2) staff training, (3) isolated communities, (4) commodities, (5) procurement systems, and (6) preparing the Joint Field Office.

Staffing

FEMA deployed and maintained as many as 1,224 staff at the height of the response period to assist with disaster operations. In doing so, FEMA had to overcome significant challenges involving its Qualification System and Automated Deployment Database. FEMA also faced a few challenges engaging FEMA Corps.

Within a week of the Declaration, FEMA deployed over 800 personnel to support disaster response activities; and within about 30 days, FEMA's personnel numbered as many as 1,224. FEMA leadership, however, encountered various challenges with its personnel systems—the FEMA Qualification System and Automated Deployment Database. For example, according to FEMA officials at the Joint Field Office, these systems did *not* (1) always represent accurate staff qualifications; (2) classify personnel by response vs. recovery functions; and (3) reflect important employee characteristics (e.g., wheelchair-bound, unfamiliar with FEMA's field-based technologies) that could affect their placement within a disaster environment. FEMA told us that they overcame these problems and eventually assigned the right people to the right jobs. However, based on our reports on previous disasters, FEMA has been encountering similar problems since it implemented the FEMA Qualification System in October 2012. Therefore, because the issues involving FEMA's personnel systems appear to be systemic, we plan to issue a separate audit report on this subject.

FEMA encountered a few problems in using FEMA Corps in its initial disaster response and recovery operations.[6] For example, FEMA met only 62.5 percent of its overall FEMA Corps recruitment goals, FEMA Corps' attrition rate was about 25 percent, and FEMA officials were not always familiar with Corps members' roles and responsibilities.

[6] FEMA Corps is a partnership between FEMA and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to establish a FEMA-devoted unit of 1,600 members within AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). FEMA Corps is solely dedicated to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Corps members represent an approximate 70 percent cost savings over reservists. FEMA Corps members now generally make up about 20 percent of FEMA's total deployed workforce.

However, FEMA overcame these challenges and successfully deployed as many as 316 FEMA Corps members at the height of the disaster response phase. FEMA Corps members had—

- assisted in registering more than 28,000 survivors for disaster assistance;
- received, sorted, and distributed donations, including 25,000 pounds of food, 33,280 gallons of water, and 31,500 pounds of clothing;
- provided disaster assistance information to over 700 survivors at shelters and thousands more at Disaster Recovery Centers; and
- worked with teams of FEMA specialists to record damages to roads, buildings, and utilities for preliminary disaster assessments.

Staff Training

FEMA overcame a variety of staff training challenges involving Public Assistance Alternative Procedures, WebEOC, and Incident Management Assistance Teams.

On January 29, 2013, the President signed into law the *Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013*, which authorizes FEMA to implement alternative procedures for Public Assistance Program permanent work and a debris removal pilot program.[7] Because these procedures and pilot program were relatively new, FEMA officials did not initially have a thorough understanding of them, which sometimes made it difficult for them to explain these new options to Public Assistance applicants. FEMA published its policy on alternative procedures for permanent work on May 20, 2013, and for debris removal on June 28, 2013—only a few months before the Colorado Flood. Consequently, FEMA generated printed materials for reference and initiated training (and continues to do so) for its personnel who are most responsible for working with Public Assistance applicants.

Beginning in August 2012, FEMA started using WebEOC, a web-based information management system that provides a single access point for collecting and disseminating real-time disaster-related information. However, FEMA officials experienced challenges with WebEOC, including—

- limited training;
- training (when available) focused on technical, rather than functional, use;

[7] FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program provides disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of—and mitigation measures for—disaster-damaged facilities.

- absence of apparent policies and procedures; and
- integration/duplication with active redundant systems.

FEMA officials mitigated these challenges by using WebEOC together with existing systems. For example, at the beginning of the deployment, FEMA officials tracked action requests using multiple systems (including FEMA's Request Action Tracking System). FEMA uses action request forms to document Federal and State requirements for commodities, equipment, teams, and services. Senior officials at the Joint Field Office were able to successfully transition staff from using the independent Request Action Tracking System to rely more heavily on WebEOC. By using WebEOC, FEMA is able to better share information with the State—which also uses WebEOC for sharing information with and tracking requests from its local governments. Therefore, FEMA should continue to make progress in using WebEOC as intended to include tracking action request forms. By implementing WebEOC, FEMA has taken a positive step towards sharing information and increasing coordination with the State.

FEMA also faced challenges in training the Incident Management Assistance Team. Upon the Disaster Declaration, the Incident Management Assistance Team West became almost immediately responsible to oversee and assist more than 1,200 FEMA personnel performing various disaster response and recovery duties. However, most team members occupied this leadership capacity with FEMA for the first time, had no prior on-the-job training related to their specific position, and did not receive ample position-specific training as part of their training curriculum. This occurred because FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Team instructional program focused primarily on management and leadership training. As a result, Team members were not always optimally prepared for their FEMA position-specific responsibilities upon deployment. FEMA was able to mitigate these challenges by reassigning various team members—who were initially responsible for staffing the most senior leadership positions—to deputy-level positions. This configuration enabled them to shadow their (more experienced) colleagues and acquire on-the-job training.

Isolated Communities

The isolation of several disaster-affected communities (generally Colorado's "mountain towns") presented several challenges to FEMA. These challenges included (1) identifying the number and location of isolated survivors, (2) registering disaster survivors who did not have access to online registration for Individual Assistance, and (3) traveling to isolated communities.

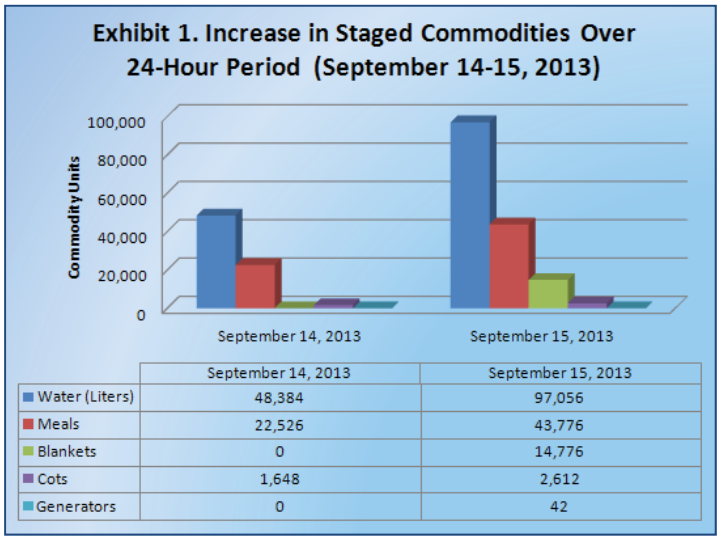
FEMA personnel used geographic information systems to create data overlays onto preexisting maps to identify the needs of disaster survivors (as well as response and recovery personnel) located in isolated communities. These overlays allowed FEMA officials to identify the precise numbers and locations of disaster survivors, affected (damaged) structures and road sections, damage densities, topography (roads and water bodies), and sheltering options. As a result, FEMA was informed about and responsive to isolated survivors.

Many isolated disaster survivors did not have access to online registration for Individual Assistance. FEMA addressed these connectivity challenges for Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams deployed to isolated communities in a variety of ways. For example, FEMA deployed one team (as a pilot program) that had tablet-based registration forms that could be accessed offline; equipped other personnel with hardcopy registration forms; and used portable satellite equipment to establish temporary connectivity.

Traveling to various isolated communities was often difficult for FEMA's Disaster Assistance Survivor Teams. FEMA wanted to ensure that disaster survivors located in isolated communities could register for disaster assistance and receive important information in as timely a manner as possible. To address this issue, FEMA used helicopters to transport personnel for various assignments. FEMA officials acknowledged that this approach has inherent operating costs and safety risks, but overall found it beneficial in responding to the Colorado Flood.

Commodities

FEMA's commodities distribution center in Fort Worth, Texas, quickly prepared and rapidly deployed a variety of essential goods (such as, water, meals, blankets, etc.) to FEMA's Staging Area. As a result, FEMA commodities officials made available tens of thousands of daily necessities for disaster survivors on the date of the disaster declaration. Within a 24-hour period, FEMA rapidly increased the amount of commodities on hand across nearly every type of commodity (figure 2).



	September 14, 2013	September 15, 2013
Water (Liters)	48,384	97,056
Meals	22,526	43,776
Blankets	0	14,776
Cots	1,648	2,612
Generators	0	42

Figure 2: FEMA Commodities Available for Colorado Flood Survivors, September 14–15, 2013
Source: FEMA and OIG Analyses

FEMA was successful despite a variety of challenges related to the maintenance, deployment, and staging of its commodities. Specifically, they faced the following challenges:

- Commodities officials had to manage a variety of redundant and stove-piped database systems.[8]
- Some commodities—such as generators, vehicles, satellites, and light towers—arrived at the disaster staging site in disrepair or in a state of inoperability (which required repair).
- Commodities officials had to (manually) account for the various staged commodities, without automated processes (e.g., bar coding).
- Commodities arrived in non-standardized packaging, which required additional effort to count and unload.

Procurement Systems

FEMA personnel effectively procured 61 contracts totaling $4.7 million in the initial stage of disaster response. These included contracts for security at Disaster Recovery Centers, fuel, safety equipment, and American Sign Language interpreters. Further, FEMA procured 34 of these contracts, totaling $3.4 million, locally. Its procurement

[8] These systems include: Logistics Information Management System, National Emergency Management Information System, Sunflower Asset Management, Incident Resource Inventory System, Total Asset Visibility Systems, eTasker, Trading Partner Management, Warehouse Management, and OrbiTRAX.

officials successfully managed a variety of challenges with their procurement processes and systems. Among these challenges were the following:

- FEMA needs a single standardized database for capturing essential procurement information such as Budget Object Codes, Vendor Contact Information, Requisition Codes, disaster and supporting documentation.
- FEMA uses a procurement checklist, but it needs more detail to include all necessary procurement-related criteria for which the Procurement Officer is responsible.
- FEMA often manages procurement documents physically—rather than electronically—thus necessitating printing documents in hardcopy form, scanning them into FEMA's variety of procurement databases, and providing them to any relevant stakeholders.

Preparing the Joint Field Office

FEMA made its Joint Field Office operational quickly, within 4 days of the disaster declaration and amidst a variety of challenges.[9] FEMA ordinarily selects a Joint Field Office location close to the disaster area and based on particular specifications, such as size, access, configuration, and information technology (IT) infrastructure. However, for the Colorado Flood, FEMA collocated and established the office alongside the State's Emergency Management offices, far from the disaster damaged areas. FEMA did so at the request of the State—who asked for heightened coordination with FEMA. The building presented a variety of challenges, including: (1) the presence of commercial tenants, (2) unfinished areas, (3) lack of a loading dock and service elevators, and (4) limited IT connectivity. Consequently, FEMA had to accomplish the following tasks: (1) relocate tenants before FEMA occupied the space; (2) implement basic finishes to incomplete and unsafe areas (for example, covering concrete floors and exposed ceilings); (3) transport all equipment and furniture manually through the building, using only stairs and passenger elevators; and (4) work with commercial vendors to establish viable IT connectivity.

[9] The Joint Field Office is a temporary Federal multiagency coordination center FEMA establishes locally to facilitate field-level domestic incident management activities related to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The office provides a central location for the coordination of Federal, State, local, tribal, nongovernmental, and private-sector organizations.

FEMA Relied on a Variety of Sourcing Methods for Response and Recovery Operations

FEMA made effective sourcing decisions for this disaster. At the Joint Field Office, three different sections—Operations, Logistics, and Administration and Finance—were responsible for disaster-related sourcing. The primary sourcing methods they used included: (1) mission assignments; (2) requisitions for supplies, equipment, services, and personnel; and (3) acquisitions. FEMA was also involved in reviewing Emergency Management Assistance Compact costs for the State for eligibility and reimbursement.

Mission Assignments

As of November 5, 2013, FEMA had obligated nearly $14 million in mission assignments to 19 Federal agencies to support the disaster response and recovery efforts.[10] These mission assignments provided resources such as aviation support, damage assessments, and the cleanup of oil and hazardous materials.

FEMA used the following types of mission assignments during this disaster:

- Federal Operations Support—where FEMA requests another Federal agency to assist in disaster response (FEMA pays all costs); and
- Direct Federal Assistance—where States request this type of mission assignment when they do not have the resources to provide specific types of disaster assistance (States pay a share of the costs).[11]

FEMA provided 31 Federal Operations Support Mission Assignments valued at over $5 million, and 6 Direct Federal Assistance Mission Assignments valued at $8.6 million.

Requisitions for Supplies, Equipment, Services, and Personnel

FEMA funded an initial $33 million for requisitions of various supplies and services such as leasing of temporary housing sites, security, and office supplies. The Joint Field Office's Logistics Section processed requests for supplies, equipment, and services that the Operations Section did not address. If the Logistics Section could not fill the request, Logistics Section personnel forwarded the requirement to the Administrative and Finance Section for funding and procurement action.

[10] FEMA issues mission assignments in anticipation of, or response to, a Presidential declaration of an emergency or major disaster to direct other Federal agencies to complete specific tasks.
[11] Direct Federal Assistance mission assignments are a particularly effective sourcing method because FEMA requires completion within 60 days of the emergency or disaster declaration.

Acquisitions

As of October 30, 2013, the Procurement Unit at the Joint Field Office awarded 61 contracts totaling $4.7 million (see *Procurement Systems*, p. 9). Staff of the unit filled the orders that Logistics Section officials forwarded to them using Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact

Thirteen states deployed 296 personnel to support the recovery efforts through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.[12] These states are Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming. These states provided Colorado with a variety of personnel, including National Guard Engineers, Public Assistance Crew Leaders, and Damage Assessment Team members. For instance, Redhorse Squadron of Montana Air National Guard supported Operation Sapper Fury, with the primary mission of repairing critical roadways in the hard-hit areas such as Lyons and Estes Park. Compact teams also assisted in deploying equipment, such as helicopters. Compact processes are a function and responsibility of the state(s); therefore, FEMA was not directly involved. However, if the receiving state requests reimbursement for Compact-related activities, FEMA will review those costs—estimated in November 2013 at about $5.2 million for this disaster—for eligibility under the Public Assistance Program.

FEMA Coordinated Effectively with Its Federal, State, and Local Partners

During its response to the flood, FEMA effectively coordinated its major activities with other Federal agencies and State/local partners. These activities included: (1) establishing staging and mobilization sites, (2) coordinating with Federal partners for FEMA Corps staffing, (3) pursuing long-term Federal disaster recovery coordination, (4) seeking guidance from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG), (5) collocating its Joint Field Office with the State Emergency Management offices, (6) coordinating Disaster Survivor Assistance Team activities through the State, (7) conducting Public Assistance Program applicant briefings and

[12] The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is an agreement that enables states to share resources during times of governor declared states of emergency. It complements the Federal disaster response system and allows States to send personnel, equipment, and commodities to help disaster relief efforts in other states. Under the Compact, the state receiving assistance is responsible for reimbursing the state(s) that provide the assistance.

kickoff meetings, and (8) coordinating with State and local officials to establish and support transitional sheltering and long-term housing.

Federal Staging Areas and Commodity Transports

The FEMA Logistics Management Directorate in Washington, DC, coordinated with the U.S. Air Force and activated the Federal Staging Area at Buckley Air Force Base, a U.S. military installation in Buckley, Colorado.

FEMA also coordinated with the Colorado Department of Transportation to obtain special (size and weight) permits to allow their semi-trucks to transport commodities in and out of the staging area and via Colorado's roadways.

Coordinating with Federal Agencies To Obtain FEMA Corps Staffing

FEMA relied upon its partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service to establish the FEMA Corps within AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps, and to employ Corps members within FEMA.[13] As mentioned previously, FEMA Corps members were instrumental in achieving critical, mission-oriented goals (see *Staffing*, p. 5).

Federal Disaster Recovery Coordination

The Federal Disaster Recovery Coordination group was proactive in coordinating disaster recovery efforts among applicable Federal agencies, and began working on site about one week after the disaster declaration.[14] FEMA's objectives in Colorado with respect to these efforts included: (1) facilitating long-term relationships among agencies, (2) identifying technical expertise and funding opportunities, (3) suggesting strategies for addressing specific needs, and (4) encouraging a whole community approach to disaster recovery. In doing so, FEMA has already facilitated disaster recovery coordination amongst the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of

[13] The Corporation for National and Community Service is a Federal agency that is the Nation's largest grant maker for service and volunteering. AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women ages 18–24, aimed at strengthening communities and developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service.

[14] Federal Disaster Recovery Coordination provides a structure for seamless coordination between Federal, State, tribal and local governments, the private sector, and voluntary, faith-based and community organizations. It primarily focuses Federal resources on the most pertinent recovery needs, particularly in five key areas: Housing; Infrastructure Systems; Economic, Health, and Social Services; Natural and Cultural Resources; and Community Planning and Capacity Building.

the Interior, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and U.S. Department of Commerce.

Office of Inspector General

FEMA, State, and local officials partnered with us to help increase their awareness of the key issues we prioritize throughout the course of our audits—particularly those related to how FEMA Public Assistance Program applicants account for and expend grant funds according to Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines. Our goal was to proactively mitigate against fraud, waste, and abuse, and to lessen the risk that applicants will have to eventually return Federal funding because of noncompliance with governing rules. To achieve these objective, we—

- provided briefings on prevalent audit issues to FEMA, State, and local officials;
- presented information on key audit considerations at various applicant briefings and kickoff meetings.[15] This led to FEMA and the State revising their joint Public Assistance briefing for applicants to incorporate some of our audit-related concerns; and
- provided FEMA and State officials our *Audit Tips for Managing Disaster-Related Project Costs Guide* for recipients of FEMA Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation funds. FEMA and State officials consequently began distributing this document alongside applications for Public Assistance Program grant funding. The State of Colorado also introduced and made available this document on its *Colorado Floods Recovery* website.

Joint Field Office

FEMA accommodated the State's request to locate the Joint Field Office alongside the State Office of Emergency Management (and apart from the disaster site). They did this to support the State's aim for consistent coordination with, and easy access to, FEMA officials. FEMA's accommodation to the State's request demonstrated its commitment to supporting State officials.

[15] The State conducts Applicants' Briefings to inform prospective applicants of available assistance and eligibility requirements for obtaining Federal assistance under the declared event. The first meeting between the applicant, the Public Assistance Coordinator, and Applicant Liaison is the Kickoff Meeting, which FEMA holds with each applicant to assess the applicant's individual needs, discuss disaster-related damage, and set forth a plan of action for repair of the applicant's facilities.

Disaster Survivor Assistance Team Coordination

In other states and previous disasters, Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams have exercised relative autonomy to canvass the various disaster-affected communities to register survivors for assistance, provide information, and answer questions. In response to this disaster, however, State officials wanted to closely coordinate team activity within the communities, and therefore partnered with FEMA officials to ensure that the State identified areas in need of attention and authorized teams to enter those communities. Ultimately, teams visited more than 62,000 homes and 2,741 businesses to provide disaster assistance information.

Applicant Briefings and Kickoff Meetings

FEMA participated in various State-run Applicant Briefings and led numerous Kickoff Meetings with the State's coordination and participation.

As of February 5, 2014, the State—with FEMA's participation—held 17 Applicant Briefings in a variety of locations throughout the disaster-damaged areas. FEMA held 231 kickoff meetings across 18 counties designated for Public Assistance, with current obligated funding of $40+ million across 381 Public Assistance subgrants obligated for eligible projects.

Coordination with State and Local Officials for Transitional Sheltering and Housing

FEMA, in coordination with State and local officials, identified and registered 177 hotels they would use to provide sheltering assistance for 1,067 households. They also determined that survivors would need 66 manufactured housing units (mobile homes) for longer-term housing and subsequently identified placement sites, obtained housing and zoning permits, and identified and established utility routes.

Conclusion

FEMA officials performed efficiently and effectively in their initial response to the Colorado Flood. They quickly responded to the disaster with sufficient resources to match its scale; were resourceful in overcoming (or lessening the impact of) a variety of significant challenges; engaged in appropriate disaster-related sourcing activities; and effectively coordinated with relevant Federal, State, and local partners.

Recommendations

The report contains no recommendations; therefore, we consider it closed.

Management Comments and OIG Analysis

FEMA concurs with this report and its conclusions. FEMA officials declined a formal exit conference and indicated that they may provide us comments after we issue this report.

Appendix A
Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107−296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the Department.

The overall objective of this audit was to determine whether FEMA's initial response to the Colorado Flood was effective and efficient, and to evaluate FEMA's actions, resources, and authorities according to Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines in effect at the time of our fieldwork. Our sub-objectives for this audit were to determine (1) the major activities FEMA performed initially in response to the emergency and major disaster declaration, (2) the most significant challenges FEMA overcame (or mitigated) throughout the course of the initial response and recovery effort, (3) FEMA's disaster-related sourcing activities, and (4) FEMA's coordination with Federal, State, and local partners. The audit covered FEMA's response and recovery activities and financial and disaster data for Disaster Number 4145-DR-CO for the period September 11, 2013, through February 5, 2014, or as of the date stated for the data presented.

To accomplish our objective, we deployed to the disaster sites within 2 weeks of the Major Disaster Declaration. We collocated at the Joint Field Office in Centennial, Colorado, with FEMA, other Federal agencies, and State officials, and based our operations out of that office, as practicable.

We interviewed officials within FEMA Senior Leadership (Federal Coordinating Officer, Deputy Federal Coordinating Officers, and Chief of Staff); FEMA Section Leadership (Operations, Logistics, and Planning); FEMA Senior Branch Leadership; FEMA Information Technology; FEMA Office of General Counsel; FEMA Office of External Affairs; FEMA Commodities; FEMA Disability/Accessibility; FEMA Corps; FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams; FEMA Geographic Information Systems/Mapping; FEMA Region VIII; FEMA Disaster Recovery Center Management; all FEMA personnel classes; State of Colorado Office of Emergency Management/Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Local Government (e.g. a mayor, city managers); Colorado Department of Transportation; and FEMA Public Assistance Applicants.

We conducted fieldwork activities at the Joint Field Office; FEMA Branch Offices; Disaster Survivor Assistance Team locations; the Federal Staging Area (Buckley U.S. Air Force Base); the Emergency Operations Centers (State and county); Disaster Recovery

Centers (Boulder, Longmont); the Colorado Department of Transportation; the State Emergency Management Office; Disaster Sites (e.g., Jamestown, Lyons, Estes Park); local government offices (Longmont, Berthoud, and Adams County); applicant briefings (Boulder County, Adams County); and kickoff meetings (City of Longmont, City of Berthoud).

We reviewed FEMA reports, including the: Incident Action Plans/Incident Support Plans; Daily Operations Briefings; Situation Reports; Common Operating Picture; FEMA Region VIII Briefings; Fact Sheets; and Private Sector E-News.

We also performed other procedures considered necessary to accomplish our objectives. We did not assess the adequacy of FEMA's internal controls applicable to disaster response because it was not necessary to accomplish our audit objective.

We conducted this performance audit between September 2013 and May 2014, pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives.

Appendix B
Report Distribution

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Director, Risk Management and Compliance
Federal Coordinating Officer(s), FEMA Disaster Number 4145-DR-CO
Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer(s), FEMA Disaster Number 4145-DR-CO
Regional Administrator, FEMA Region VIII
Audit Liaison, FEMA (Job Code 14-084-EMO-FEMA)
Audit Liaison, FEMA Region VIII

Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board
Director, Investigations, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board

Office of Management and Budget
Chief, Homeland Security Branch
DHS OIG Budget Examiner

Congress
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Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Colorado Office of Emergency Management, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (Grantee)
Director, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
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OIG HOTLINE

To expedite the reporting of alleged fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement, or any other kinds of criminal or noncriminal misconduct relative to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs and operations, please visit our website at www.oig.dhs.gov and click on the red tab titled "Hotline" to report. You will be directed to complete and submit an automated DHS OIG Investigative Referral Submission Form. Submission through our website ensures that your complaint will be promptly received and reviewed by DHS OIG.

Should you be unable to access our website, you may submit your complaint in writing to:

Department of Homeland Security
Office of Inspector General, Mail Stop 0305
Attention: Office of Investigations Hotline
245 Murray Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

You may also call 1(800) 323-8603 or fax the complaint directly to us at (202) 254-4297.

The OIG seeks to protect the identity of each writer and caller.