



### Why This Matters

To accomplish its mission to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic disasters and emergencies, FEMA collects, uses, maintains, or disseminates significant amounts of personally identifiable information (PII) daily. FEMA has more than 7,300 full-time employees at Headquarters, 10 regional offices, 3 national processing service centers, 2 mail processing centers, and additional sites across the country. Because FEMA is accountable for PII to perform essential operations, FEMA has the responsibility of developing an active culture of privacy in which managers and employees monitor and ensure that appropriate protections are in place.

### DHS Response

Our report had four recommendations to improve FEMA's culture of privacy. FEMA concurred with the four recommendations and is taking action to implement them.

### For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@dhs.gov)

## Federal Emergency Management Agency Privacy Stewardship

### What We Determined

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has made progress in implementing plans and activities to instill a culture of privacy. Specifically, it has established a privacy office that, among other functions, prepares reports on FEMA's privacy activities to the Department of Homeland Security Privacy Office, reviews suspected privacy incidents, and oversees FEMA's privacy training. However, FEMA faces a number of challenges in ensuring that PII is protected.

FEMA needs an accurate inventory of its information technology systems. In addition, it needs to complete required privacy compliance analyses and documentation for 430 unauthorized information technology systems. FEMA also needs to implement privacy assessments at disaster relief sites to improve privacy safeguards for the protection of PII collected during field operations. Further, FEMA needs to provide specialized field training to the disaster relief workforce, including procedures on properly collecting and handling PII from applicants immediately after a disaster. Finally, although FEMA has implemented a standardized privacy training course, it does not have an effective system to enforce the employee training requirement.

### What We Recommend

We recommend that the Deputy Administrator of FEMA:

- 1) Implement a plan and timeline to identify and assess 430 unauthorized systems, and complete appropriate documentation to mitigate privacy risks in the unauthorized systems that contain PII.
- 2) Direct the FEMA Privacy Office to conduct privacy assessments of disaster relief operations to improve accountability and to meet privacy requirements.
- 3) Implement specialized privacy training for the disaster relief workforce.
- 4) Improve managers' capability to monitor and enforce the completion of the standardized, FEMA-wide privacy training requirements.