



Partners in Prevention

Volume 22, Issue 1, January 2020

FEMA Releases Post-Disaster Building Safety Evaluation Guide

FEMA Building Science Branch has released FEMA P-2055: *Post-disaster Building Safety Evaluation Guidance, Report on the Current State of Practice including Recommendations Related to Structural and Nonstructural Safety and Habitability*.

This *Guide* was developed as required by the [Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018](#), Section 1241: *Post-disaster Building Safety Assessment* and targets three main stakeholder groups.

- Architects, engineers, and building officials directly involved in post-disaster building safety evaluation.
- Emergency managers and health officials who may be involved in management of the post-disaster evaluation process, including environmental health issues.
- Policy makers at state, local, tribal, and territorial and federal government levels.

FEMA P-2055 summarizes and references best practice guideline documents, identifies recommended improvements and needs, and provides interim recommendations for issues without best practice guidance. It also offers considerations for program planning prior to an incident and program management and implementation after an incident, including a primer for state, local, tribal, and territorial governments that have the authority to set standards or policy related to the implementation of post-disaster building evaluations for safety and habitability.

The *Guide* covers earthquakes; hurricanes; floods; tornadoes; tsunamis; landslides and other land instabilities; volcanoes; snow, hail, and ice storms, fire; and explosions. It can be a reference for any post-incident evaluation process and is not limited by scale or official declaration of a disaster.

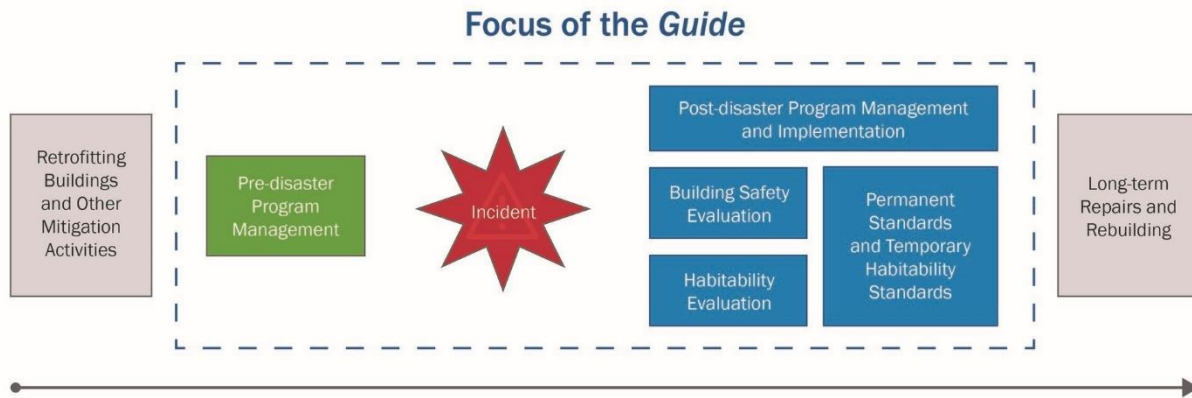


Figure 1 Graphic illustrating building safety evaluation topics covered by the *Guide*. The horizontal arrow indicates time in relation to the incident. Topics indicated in gray are outside of the scope of the *Guide*.

As shown above, this *Guide* covers a very specific need to identify which buildings are safe or unsafe to occupy after an incident. This evaluation helps reduce the overwhelming sheltering demands a community may face when impacted by a catastrophic disaster. The concept of shelters or sheltering, before, during and after disasters are subjects that FEMA, and the emergency management community, have and will continue to be actively engaged in as the work to *Build a Culture of Preparedness* and *Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters* continues.

Post-disaster building safety evaluations have traditionally focused on the key question being whether any building damage has made the building sufficiently less safe than it was before the damage to warrant limitations being placed on occupancy. This evaluation most commonly results in the placarding of buildings as Inspected, Restricted Use, and Unsafe.

Figure 2 Placards from Applied Technology Council (ATC)-20-1 *Field Manual: Procedures for Postearthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings*, Second Edition (2005)

To download FEMA P-2055 [click here](#).

For more information of FEMA Building Science Branch [click here](#).