

Prioritization of Requests for Disaster Response

When competition for UFST resources exists within the Southern Region (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA) the "regional UFST coordinator" will establish priorities in coordination with the requesting state's U&CF Coordinator.

The standard criteria used in establishing priorities include:

1. official request from the community indicating need,
2. request is within the defined scope of UFST,
 - a. stage of the disaster (first 72 hours, response or prolonged response phase, recovery).
3. absence of professional capacity (i.e. staff) to:
 - a. evaluate the risk associated with the disaster,
 - b. respond in a timely manner to meet FEMA requirements.
4. scale of the disaster (related to #1):
 - a. intensity within the community,
 - b. within the region.
5. overall level of risk to:
 - a. human life,
 - b. property and resource values.
6. support of ongoing incidents (UFST) or overall response in the community,
7. community's U&CF history and status,
8. communities with a pre-disaster MOU with state agency,
 - a. cities with a risk management plan.

Discussion:

1. The event that triggers U&CF Coordinator action and potential UFST response.
2. Debris estimation, risk assessment, or tree planting evaluations. Tree planting evaluation request would be low priority during a response phase of a disaster.
3. Cities with adequate staff for the scale of disaster (#4) would receive lower priority. Level of risk (#5) and incident timing are contributing factors for consideration.
4. Communities with "minor" damage" relative to the overall disaster will receive lower priority. Communities will be asked to prioritize areas within their city.
5. What is the potential risk (e.g. heavy damage where there are lots of people and remaining resources).
6. Will UFST response aid other responders within the community (higher priority), or is continued commitment in another community critical (lower priority).
7. Where does this community appear on the U&CF Coordinator's radar?
8. Communities that have a risk management MOU with the agency and have already defined the high priority areas of their community.

Scenario:

1. The coastal community of Balbo (population 16,000) is located just west of a category 3 hurricane landfall. Major transportation routes have been reopened, and many residents have returned to salvage and clean-up from the storm. Some utility service has been restored. Extensive damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down. The public tree population is approximately 4,000 trees and the city has an arborist on staff. The community has had a consistent urban forest management program for the last 16 years. They have requested assistance for the rapid assessment of street & park tree risk (approximately 1,600 trees in about 20% of the community's disaster area). In addition they need assistance in providing FEMA with information for a debris contract.
2. An inland (40 miles) community (Fairhope, population 36,000) was in the path of a category 4 hurricane and there is extensive damage to public trees (streets & parks). Major transportation routes have been reopened, and most residents have returned to repair and clean-up from the storm. Most utility service has been restored. Extensive damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down. The public tree population is approximately 8,000 trees and the community has no professional UF staff. They have requested assistance to evaluate risk in the community's disaster area.
3. A large metropolitan (1.2 million) area was hit by a category 4 hurricane. Some major transportation routes have been reopened, but most residents have not returned from evacuation but are expected within 2 weeks. Limited utility service has been restored. Extensive damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down over 50% of the area. The city has never had a public tree inventory or UF management plan but has a staff of 8 in their Arborists Division that enforce their development tree ordinance. They have requested assistance to evaluate risk on street (no estimate of tree count, but 3,000 miles of streets) & park trees (6,000 acres with varying levels of development).