OFFICE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS – FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS BRANCH

Disaster Funding Decisions: ER, FEMA, CDAA & Eligibility

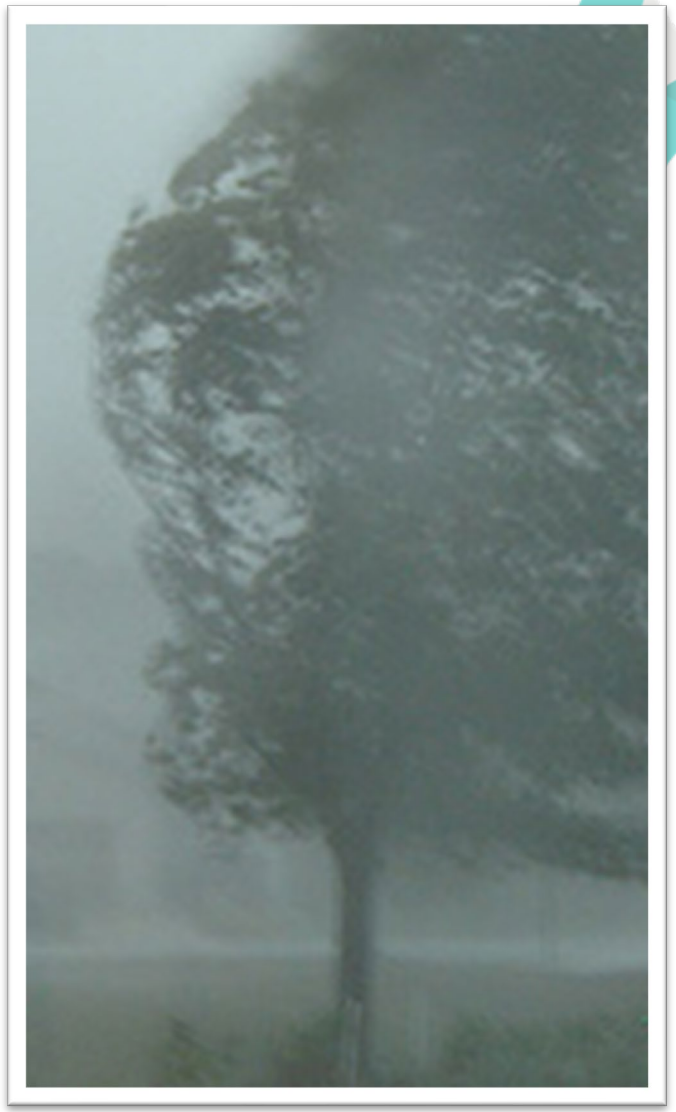
Bob Baca, Chief
Federal Infrastructure Programs Branch

November 19, 2026

Presentation Objectives

By the end of this presentation, you should understand:

- When FHWA Emergency Relief funding may apply
- How State and Federal programs work together
- Where to begin after disaster damage occurs
- How to preserve eligibility and avoid common pitfalls



Three Disaster Recovery Programs

FHWA Emergency Relief

- Damage to eligible Federal-aid roadways
- Administered through FHWA and Caltrans

FEMA Public Assistance

- Eligible public facilities and infrastructure
- Administered through FEMA and Cal OES

California Disaster Assistance Act

- State assistance for eligible disaster costs
- Administered by Cal OES



Emergency Relief (ER) Program Administration

ER Program Administration in California:

Two Oversight Tracks

1. FHWA direct oversight of Caltrans "on-system" projects
2. Caltrans delegated oversight of local agency, federal-aid road projects



Photo courtesy of Caltrans

Start With the Damaged Facility

- **Report <u>all</u> disaster damage to CalOES**
- **Federal-aid roadway damage:** Start with FHWA ER
- **Other public facility damage:** Coordinate with Cal OES regarding FEMA
- **Costs not covered by ER or FEMA:** Consider CDAA
- Confirm the funding path before beginning nonemergency work
- Do not assume that one program covers every damaged site



First Steps After a Disaster

1. Follow local emergency declaration procedures
2. Report all disaster damage to Cal OES
3. Report Federal-aid roadway damage to Caltrans through the ER process
4. Document conditions before beginning repairs



When ER Funding May Apply

ER funds may apply when:

- Damage results from an ER eligible natural disaster or catastrophic failure
- Governor's Statement of Emergency or U.S. President's Disaster Proclamation
- Disaster damage equals or exceeds $700,000 in total fed-aid roadway damage (fed share)

ER may support:

- Emergency opening repairs
- Permanent repairs
- "Betterments" and "Resiliency" improvements as part of damage repair may be eligible (requires additional justification and approvals)





Preserve Eligibility

- Photograph damage before repairs
- Document preexisting condition of facility
- Receive authorization prior to beginning permanent repair RW or CON work
- Notifying DLAE quickly on project scope changes
- Meet important ER program deadlines:
  - DAF submittal package deadline (3 months)
  - CON authorization deadline (2 years)
  - ER Time Extension Request Deadline (beginning 2 years)
    - Due beginning the 2nd FFY & every FFY thereafter, until the CON phase is authorized



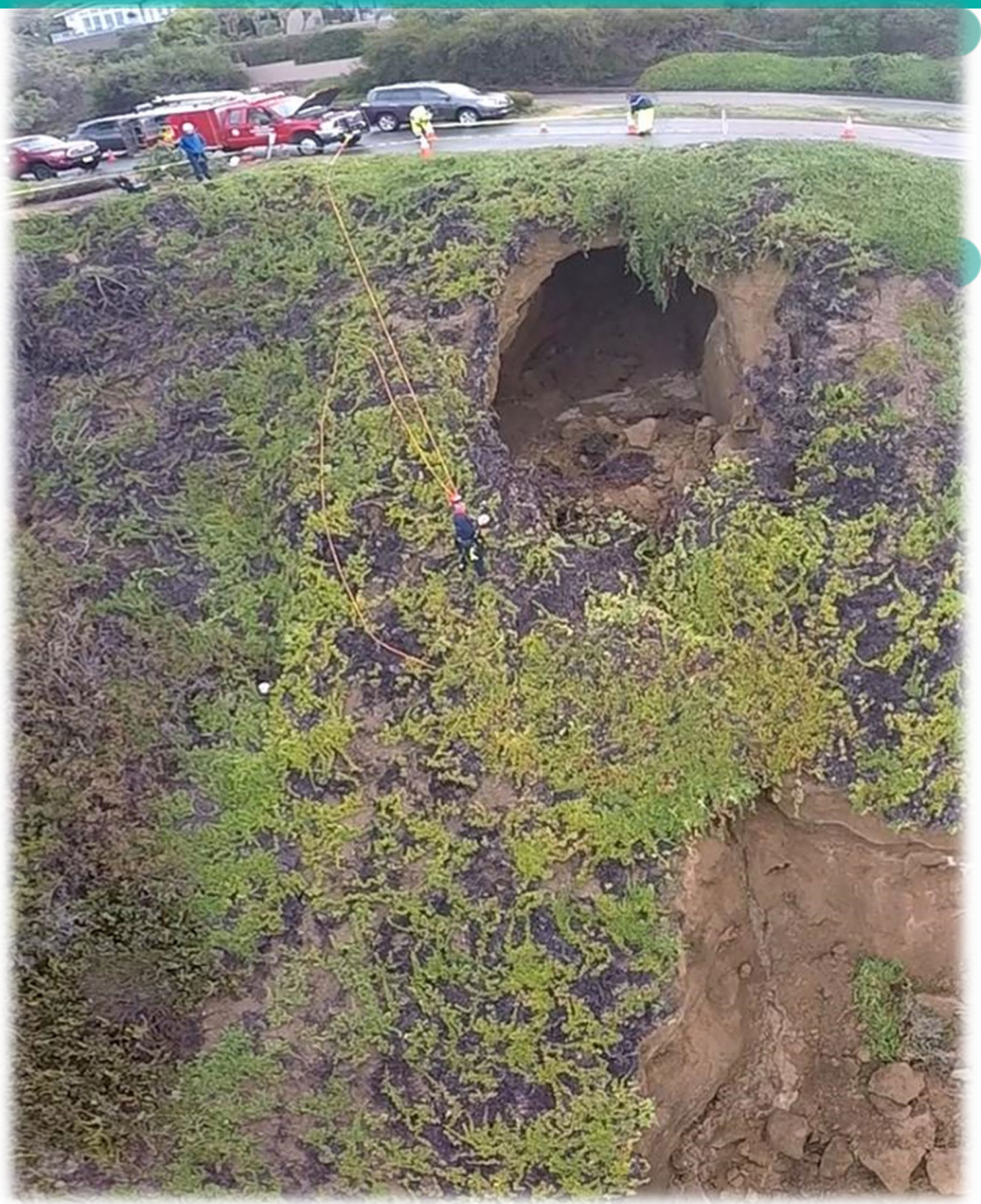
When ER Does Not Fully Cover a Project's Costs

If a site is not eligible for ER

1. Obtain the rejection determination
2. Document the reason for denial
3. Coordinate with CalOES
4. Request consideration under CDAA

If ER covers only part of the project

1. Complete the ER process
2. Identify remaining eligible local costs
3. Caltrans sends supporting records to CalOES
4. CalOES considers project for CDAA funding, if eligible, reimburses local agency.



Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Avoid These Pitfalls

- ❌ Not declaring local disaster
- ❌ Not reporting disaster damage to CalOES
- ❌ Reporting eligible disaster damage late
- ❌ Applying to the wrong program first
- ❌ Failing to document site conditions prior to disaster
- ❌ Not documenting damage adequately
- ❌ Assuming ER is the only available funding source



Key Takeaways

Key takeaways

- Report damage early and update as needed
- Start with the correct funding program
- Document damage with photos before beginning repairs
- Get authorization before beginning permanent repair right-of-way (RW) and construction (CON) work
- Get maintain complete, site-specific cost records
- Remember that ER, FEMA, and CDAA can work together



Find Us On The Web



Caltrans

http://dot.ca.gov

DLA LOCAL ASSISTANCE

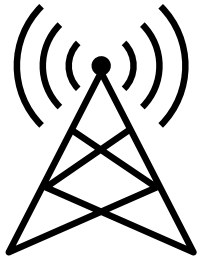
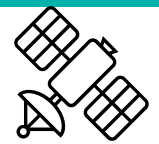
https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/

Emergency Relief (ER) Program

https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/fed-and-state-programs/emergency-relief-program

Image courtesy of Bing.com, 2026

Resources

Resources

- DLA Emergency Relief Program webpage
  https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/fed-and-state-programs/emergency-relief-program

- District Local Assistance Engineers (DLAEs) and District Local Assistance Web Pages
  https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/other-important-issues/local-assistance-contacts

- Functional Classification Maps
  https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/fed-and-state-programs/emergency-relief-program/manuals
- U.S. Census Web Site – used to distinguish between rural and urban minor collector roads
  https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-maps/2010/geo/2010-census-urban-areas.html

Questions?



Thank You...

For Your Time.



Image courtesy of Bing.com, 2026