

State of Emergency

What is a State of Emergency?

The Governor declares a State of Emergency when he/she believes a disaster has occurred or may be imminent that is severe enough to require State aid to supplement local resources in preventing or alleviating damages, loss, hardship or suffering. This declaration authorizes the Governor to speed State agency assistance to communities in need. It enables him to make resources immediately available to rescue, evacuate, shelter, provide essential commodities (i.e., heating fuel, food etc.) and quell disturbances in affected localities. It may also position the State to seek federal assistance when the scope of the event exceeds the State's resources.

1. Does a State of Emergency declaration direct citizens to take any particular action?

Answer:

No. The declaration empowers the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) to act on behalf of the Governor to employ the resources and assets of State, local and private agencies to provide immediate assistance to localities. Typically, the New Jersey State Police, National Guard, and departments of Environmental Protection, Transportation and Health are called upon rather quickly to respond to the event, and other departments are added as needed.

After the Governor issues the declaration, NJOEM puts the State Emergency Operations Plan into effect. It may also activate the State Emergency Operations Center to full 24-hour staffing to coordinate and direct State response and recovery operations. In addition, NJOEM may call on a number of private agencies such as the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) network to fulfill critical missions. The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) often provides backup emergency communications and the Civil Air Patrol may assist in search and rescue missions.

2. Does a State of Emergency mean you aren't allowed to go anywhere or do anything until it's lifted?

Answer:

The Governor's declaration does not normally restrict citizen movements or activities. The State may limit access to affected areas due to concerns for public safety but will notify the public of these restrictions. If it is necessary to impose vehicular or personal movement restrictions, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management will alert the public using all available means, including, but not limited to: the Emergency Alert System, urgent press releases, DOT

highway signs, law enforcement teletypes, etc. Every effort will be made by NJOEM to facilitate safe passage for utility, health care and emergency services workers whose presence is necessary for public safety or in response to the Emergency.

3. How long does a State of Emergency remain in effect?

Answer:

The Governor will rescind the State of Emergency when it is no longer needed to provide necessary support to localities or until the threat of impending danger from the event has passed.

4. Does a declaration of emergency bar the sale or provision of goods and services?

Answer:

The Governor's declaration does not address restrictions on the sale or provision of goods or services. However, your locality may enact restrictions under their local emergency declaration. We recommend that you contact your local government for any specific information.

5. Is it an employer's responsibility to pay employees who cannot get to work during a State of Emergency?

Answer:

The Governor's declaration does not mandate administrative policies for individual businesses or address workplace situations in which employees are unable to travel. Businesses must address hours of operation and compensation on an individual basis. Once a federal disaster is declared, employees unable to work may be eligible for unemployment assistance.

6. Are all State Offices closed during a State of Emergency?

Answer:

The Governor's declaration does not automatically close State Offices. Should it be necessary due to conditions experienced during the Emergency to scale back or close State Offices, the Governor will make an announcement to his/her Cabinet and through the media, similar to what is done during a snow storm.

"Disaster" shall mean any unusual incident resulting from natural or unnatural causes which endangers the health, safety or resources of the residents of one or more municipalities of the State, and which is or may become too large in scope or unusual in type to be handled in its entirety by regular municipal operating services. (N.J.S.A. App.A:9-33.1)
