

DEAR BPAT MEMBER:

In response to hurricanes, earthquakes, and other disasters, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) often deploys Building Performance Assessment Teams (BPATs) to conduct field investigations at disaster sites. BPATs are composed of both government and private sector nationally recognized experts in various building science and hazard-related fields. The BPAT program is managed, under contract to FEMA, by Greenhorne and O'Mara, Inc., (G&O)/ Private sector consultants who serve on BPATs the work as subconsultants to G&O.

The mission of the BPAT program is to study post-disaster building performance and to document failures and successes in an effort to promote damage reduction. To accomplish this mission, the BPAT program uses the combined resources of a Federal, State, Local and Private Sector Partnership. To learn more about the BPAT's purpose and goals, refer to FEMA's BPAT web page at www.fema.gov/mit/bpat .

The ability to quickly form and deploy BPATs is essential to the success of the BPAT program. Therefore, to increase the efficiency of the BPAT process, particularly the procurement of expert services and the deployment of BPATs to the field, we have developed this standardized BPAT Pre-deployment Package to address some commonly asked questions. This package is intended for subcontractors, subconsultants, BPAT roster members, and other potential members of BPATs such as Federal employees "mission-assigned" to the BPAT by FEMA.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who is part of the BPAT?

FEMA BPATs usually include the following types of members:

- Σ representatives of FEMA Headquarters and of FEMA Regional Offices
- Σ State and local officials
- Σ public- and private-sector experts in technical disciplines such as structural and civil engineering, architecture, building construction, natural hazard research, code development and enforcement, and technical writing

When will I know whether FEMA is going to form and deploy a BPAT?

When a disaster of national significance occurs, FEMA's Project Officer instructs G&O to begin forming a BPAT. G&O then queries the existing BPAT database, a list of experts who are interested and eligible BPAT members. If you are chosen, G&O will contact you to determine your availability for participating as a member of the BPAT. Next, G&O will submit your name and resume to FEMA for approval. A BPAT is then formed, and the entire team is put on hold. About 2 to 3 days after the disaster has occurred (e.g., after landfall of a hurricane), FEMA deploys a Preliminary Field Assessment Team (PFAT) to determine whether the deployment of a full BPAT is appropriate. The PFAT quickly assesses the damage in affected areas and determines whether the BPAT should be deployed. FEMA then informs G&O whether a BPAT will be deployed. If a team is to be deployed, the schedule is revised as necessary to account for any changes to the composition of the team. G&O then begins organizing the logistics of deploying the team. G&O will call all of the BPAT members, authorizing them to travel to a specified destination at a designated time. The BPAT meets the next day for a debriefing and to make a field schedule.

When should I book my airline ticket? Who pays for it? How am I reimbursed for hotel, meals, etc.?

Once you are authorized to travel, you are responsible for making your own airline reservations and paying for your tickets. You will be reimbursed for your travel expenses. Standard government per diem varies by state. Typically, the per diem for meals is approximately \$35 per day. The hotel per diem will vary greatly by location. Check the web site www.dtic.mil/perdiem/pdrform.html for more information. BPAT members who contract through G&O should submit their travel expenses on their regular invoices to G&O for reimbursement. BPAT members who contract through FEMA should submit receipts to the appropriate FEMA Divisions for reimbursement.

What rate will FEMA pay me?

For private BPAT members, a rate is negotiated with G&O prior to field deployment. Estimating the exact rate is difficult. Rates are approximately equal to those paid by the government for private work. A subcontract agreement is required by G&O before deployment to the field occurs. The form can be found at www.g-and-o.com/services/NHE_services/sub_form.

Do I need a rental car?

Unless otherwise directed, G&O arranges for transportation in the field.

What type of equipment should I take?

You are responsible for providing any necessary equipment such as a mobile phone, pager, laptop computer, printer, GPS, and digital camera. G&O will take the photographs to be included in the BPAT report. If you want your photographs included in the report, you must coordinate with G&O. Slides or prints from a conventional film camera are preferred over photographs from a digital camera because they produce a higher-quality image.

What clothing should I bring?

Bring proper field attire for the climate in which the BPAT will be working. Jeans and t-shirts are appropriate. It is a good idea to bring enough clothes for at least 1 week. If necessary, you can usually visit a laundromat. Steeltoe / steelshank boots are recommended.

What safety issues should I be concerned with?

The BPAT support contractor will provide hard hats for the team. People with allergies may have problems and should consult their doctor before traveling with the BPAT. Make sure that you bring adequate amounts of any prescription medications. It is recommended that you bring bug spray. Check the Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site for immunization information (www.cdc.gov/travel) . Sometimes BPATs travel to areas of the Caribbean such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Once I am selected to be a BPAT member, what can I do to prepare?

If possible, familiarize yourself with the local codes and standards of the area where the BPAT will be working. For floods, look to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations and practices. Training is available for college faculty and Federal government employees at MBDSI at the Emergency Management Institute www.fema.gov/emi .

What are other sources of information?

The BPAT web site www.fema.gov/mit/bpat is an excellent source of information. In addition, you can review other BPAT reports.

What is expected of me in the field? What will we be looking at in the field?

You will not be collecting detailed damage data, but you will be making general observations about structural damages in order to develop recommendations. Usually, you will be provided with a list of items to investigate in the field.

Who is in charge of field operations?

FEMA's Project Officer has the overall responsibility for the BPAT, including field operations. However, G&O is in charge of developing the required body of technical knowledge, the logistics associated with the BPAT, and the production of reports and other BPAT products including graphical illustrations and PowerPoint illustrations.

How long are the workdays in the field? Will I be working weekends? How long will the field work last?

BPAT members work long hours in the field for approximately 1 to 3 weeks. Typically, BPATs will work through weekends. This work requires dedication. It is important to realize that it may be difficult to communicate with your office while working on a BPAT. Cellular service is often interrupted. For this reason, BPAT members should not try to do other work in the field.

Who do I see if there are problems?

G&O's Team Manager will address any problems that arise in the field.

What is expected of me after we leave the field?

After the field work is completed and on the last day in the field, a meeting is held to begin work on the draft BPAT report. Under the direction of FEMA's Project Officer and G&O's Team Manager, an outline is developed, writing assignments are made, and a schedule is developed for the draft BPAT report. Observations, findings, and preliminary conclusions are generated for the report after the team has left the field. The report writing/revision process lasts for another 3 to 4 months.