

Mobilizing an Emergency Response for Agricultural Workers

Agricultural workers are an integral part of the community and U.S. economy. They work in agriculture by harvesting crops, tending to livestock, and processing agricultural products, either on a migratory or seasonal basis. Even when doing essential work, migratory and seasonal agricultural workers (MSAW) have multiple barriers when accessing healthcare and social services, including poverty, frequent moves or changes in residency, low literacy, low fluency in English, and cultural barriers among others. These factors may make the MSAW population more vulnerable to emergency situations related to natural disasters and/or national emergencies.

This guide describes how to mobilize an emergency response for MSAWs through the following three key steps:

1. Identify and locate MSAW populations during emergencies.
2. Develop a communication strategy.
3. Collaborate with community partners for outreach and resources.

Follow these steps for effective emergency preparedness planning and implementation with agricultural worker communities.



Step 1: Identify and Locate MSAW Populations

The first step during an emergency is to know who and where MSAW populations are that may be affected by the emergency event or crisis. You can gather demographic information like their background, race, ethnicity, age, education, employment, income, etc. Having this information before an actual emergency occurs, would be best, but if not, gather this as soon as possible so you can customize your outreach and messaging to this specific population. These tools can be used to identify and locate MSAW populations and emergency events in an area:

- [National Center for Farmworker Health \(NCFH\) Farm Labor Data Dashboard](#): This interactive, web-based tool allows you to view estimates of MSAWs in your county, state, and/or across the nation. The Data Dashboard also provides:
 - o **Population Estimates**: It allows you to view seasonal fluctuations of MSAWs in your area, concentrations of H-2A workers, the number of MSAW dependents, and total number of estimated MSAWs in a specific region.
 - o **Types of Agricultural Work**: It provides information on the type of agricultural industry, the seasonality of the workforce, and employer contract information.
 - o **Mapping Features**: It identifies health centers across the country that receive federal funding as Migrant Health Programs, locations of H-2A work sites, and locations of MSAW housing sites.
 - o **Farmworker Community Resources**: It identifies community resources in the area that are MSAW focused.
- [OnTheMap for Emergency Management](#): This interactive map provides a live list of emergency events, their locations, and the number of populations affected by the emergency.
- [National Farmworker Jobs Program Offices](#): This web page from the U.S. Department of Labor has information about the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) and allows you to view programs in your area.



Step 2: Develop a Communications Strategy

Once you have identified and located MSAWs in your area, the next step is to develop a messaging and communications strategy to reach this population quickly and effectively, especially during a crisis.

MSAWs are a diverse community with many linguistic and cultural differences. Questions to consider as you develop your communications strategy include: Are MSAWs in your area able to understand written or spoken English? If not, has information been translated into their native language? Will you need the support of interpreters? What communication channels does this population use to receive and share information?

If using materials that are already developed, it may be helpful to review them to ensure they meet the linguistic and cultural needs of your MSAW population. Assess the educational materials for literacy and adapt messaging as needed so it includes accurate and factual information that is easy to understand. The tools below can be used to help you prepare and create emergency communication messaging for MSAWs that consider their specific needs:

- [Effective Communication with MSAW During National Emergencies](#): This NCFH resource informs health centers or other farmworker-serving organizations on the challenges faced by MSAWs during national emergencies, and how to initiate effective emergency communications with this population. (Also available in [Spanish](#))
- [Effective Communication with Indigenous Agricultural Workers During National Emergencies](#): This NCFH resource provides information about the Indigenous farmworker population, ways national emergencies impact them, and tips to improve their emergency response and communication efforts with this population. (Also available in [Spanish](#))
- [Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Materials](#): This website from Ready.gov offers free preparedness materials, hazard information sheets, and other tools in various languages from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). They also have an inventory of Preparedness Videos in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



Step 3: Collaborate with Community Partners

After developing your communication strategy, the third step is to disseminate emergency information through outreach, aside from digital and radio communications. The key to successful outreach is to identify partners who have built trust with MSAWs in your community, can offer services and support during an emergency, and who can play an active role in your emergency response plan. MSAWs may lack the following during an emergency: access to basic items like food, water, and shelter; access to healthcare, treatment of chronic conditions, and medication; access to transportation or public transit; access to accurate information and communications given loss of power; and access to disaster assistance/relief. Given these possible limitations consider collaborating with community partners who could mitigate these barriers, such as health centers, health departments, community-based organizations, small community businesses, churches and other faith-based organizations, libraries, schools, daycares, etc.



After establishing a network of partnerships, it is important to sustain your network through ongoing communications, consistent meetings, and action planning. Develop a plan for how to work together during an emergency response.

1. Arrange consistent meetings for ongoing discussions.
2. Develop formal agreements or memorandum of understanding (MOU) if needed.
3. Identify roles each organization would take before, during, and after an emergency. Be sure to include representatives of the MSAW population in your discussions and emergency preparedness planning.
4. Integrate partners into emergency drills/exercises.
5. Involve partners in emergency preparedness and response trainings.
6. Assess community needs and identify new available resources.
7. Re-evaluate and modify emergency plans as needed on an ongoing basis.

Collaborate with community partners who can help you address the MSAW population needs during a crisis!

These partners could help you share information through the more common ways of reaching MSAWs, including telephone calls or text messages, digitally via Whatsapp or Facebook platforms, or through in person outreach with trusted community members or leaders. Community Health Workers (CHWs) have great connections with the MSAW population and are often the first line of communication with the community to ensure accurate and current information on public health emergencies. CHWs may already be members of the community themselves, have established relationships, and know the population's needs and challenges.

The tools below can be used to identify and mobilize community organizations in your area and help you find resources for the MSAW population:

- [NCFH Farmworker Serving Organizations](#): Offers a list of community-based organizations whose primary mission is to serve agricultural workers and their families.
- [CDC Health Department Directories](#): Offers a list of public health officials, state, local, and territorial health departments, and tribes and Indian organizations.
- [Mexican Consulates](#): Includes the addresses and phone numbers of Mexico's consulates, in the United States.
- [FEMA Disaster Assistance](#): Offers information about different assistance programs available for individuals to support disaster recovery.
- [Rural Emergency Preparedness and Response](#): Provides resources and contact information from federal, state, and local organizations.
- [Outreach and Community Health Workers in Health Center Emergency Preparedness and Management](#): This tip sheet focuses on how outreach workers and CHWs can support the basic emergency management expectations for health centers.
- [Migrant Education Program Offices](#): This interactive map provides State Program Contacts and regional representatives for Migrant Education.
- [Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Offices](#): This interactive map allows you to locate a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program near you.
- [Farmworker Legal Aid Services Directory](#): This list provides information about where to find legal services in states across the country.



Additional Emergency Preparedness Resources

The resources below offer additional information and considerations for emergency planning and response efforts to better respond to your MSAW population needs:

- [Emergency Preparedness and Agricultural Workers](#): This resource describes different emergencies, why agricultural workers are vulnerable during disasters, the potential effects of emergencies and disasters on health centers, and ways to implement emergency preparedness and management.
- [Strategies for Emergency Management of Chronic Conditions Among Agricultural Workers](#): This resource provides health center staff, clinical coordinators, and emergency managers with tools to assist MSAW patients who have chronic care conditions.
- [Ag Safety FactSheet: Emergency Preparedness for Farmworkers](#): This factsheet from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) outlines agricultural safety to lessen the impact of unexpected emergencies and disasters on farms.
- [Keeping Workers Safe during Disaster Cleanup and Recovery](#): This factsheet from OSHA describes hazards resulting from natural disasters and precautions for employers and workers.
- [Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Emergency Preparedness Planning Guide | National Rural Health Association](#): This guide provides actionable steps public health professionals pre-event, during the event, and post-event, considering how the emergency type will impact the response.
- [Relief and Recovery on the Frontlines of Disaster](#): This rapid response toolkit has information for immigrant and refugee organizations on responding to extreme weather.
- [Keep Food and Water Safe After a Disaster](#): This webpage outlines steps to take to prevent illness from unsafe food in a disaster or emergency.
- [Clean Up Safely After a Disaster](#): This webpage outlines steps to take to protect yourself and your loved ones during cleanup after a natural disaster. (Available in [Spanish](#))



Implement these steps and use these tools to better plan and mobilize an emergency response for agricultural workers today!

**Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) resource, [Communication Planning to Address Access and Functional Needs of Farmworkers During Emergencies](#).*

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