

## **Lesson 3: Getting Started**

### **Lesson Overview**

In the previous lesson you were introduced to the resources and processes you will use on the job. In order to be an effective GIS Specialist, you need to know how to set up in your new environment and use the tools and resources you will have access to.

This lesson highlights the initial actions you should take upon entering the JFO and provides an overview of the kinds of GIS products you will be expected to produce.

This lesson should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Recognize how to check in to a Joint Field Office
- Identify how to gather information relevant to an assignment
- Identify the types of GIS products that need to be produced during a disaster

### **Tying It Back to the Job**

This lesson aligns with the following PTB Behaviors/Activities:

- Ensure readiness for assignment prior to deployment.
- Follow proper check-in procedures upon arrival and obtain job-required equipment and supplies.
- Obtain an initial briefing from immediate supervisor and gather information relevant to your assignment.

### **Checking in to the Joint Field Office**

Every member of the FEMA team must check in to the Joint Field Office (JFO) upon arrival to obtain necessary equipment and supplies and ensure the right procedures are being followed.

Check in procedures include:

- Checking in with your supervisor
- Completing a check in packet
- Obtaining agency identification
- Checking in with the Accountable Property Manager (APM)
- Checking in with the Automated Deployment Database (ADD)
- Filling out a JFO IT Help Desk request form
- Completing security training if applicable

### **Obtaining agency identification**

This may be a badge or another type of government-issued identification issued to FEMA staff as applicable.

### **Checking in with the Accountable Property Manager**

You will need to check in with the Accountable Property Manager (APM) in order to obtain the additional job-required supplies or equipment you will need, such as:

- Laptop with the specialized GIS hardware and software you will need
- Cellular or desk phone
- Handheld GPS (if applicable)
- Camera (if applicable)
- Office supplies
- Maps
- Air Card (if applicable)

### **Check in with the Automated Deployment Database (ADD)**

To check in to with the Automated Deployment Database (ADD), you will need the following information:

- Social Security Number
- Disaster Number
- Lodging phone number and address
- Rental car information
- Emergency contact information

### **Filling out a JFO IT Help Desk**

You will need to fill out a JFO IT Help Desk request form before your laptop can be mapped to the JFO servers, printers, and other electronic equipment you may need to do your work.

### **Obtaining an Initial Briefing**

After you have checked in to the JFO and gathered the necessary supplies, the next step is to obtain an initial briefing. Your immediate supervisor's briefing should provide you with:

- Administrative documentation and procedures
- Initial direction about your assignment
- Situational information relevant to your tasks
- Information about where/how data is being stored
- Production standards for the operation

During the initial briefing, you should bring up any topics, issues, or concerns you may have about your assignment.

### **Administrative documentation and procedures**

Your supervisor should provide you with the following:

- Information on how to check into the Automated Deployment Database (ADD)
- Copy of ICS 205A (Communications List), the call-down list for the Unit
- Tour of the key areas and the facility and introduce you to the PSC and Unit Lead
- Establish communication with your assigned FEMA Qualification System Coach and Evaluator
- Information on product schedule and expected work hours

### **Where and how data is stored**

As this varies from site to site and event to event, be sure to see your supervisor for more information.

### **Production standards for the operation**

It is essential that consistency be maintained throughout the Unit for all geospatial products. Following prescribed standards helps minimize confusion and allows for a more efficient response.

Maintain consistency for the following elements for all GIS products:

- **Symbology** – labeling, terms used, etc.
- **Product updates** – updating progress, marking tasks as completed, etc.
- **Product layout**– templates, style guides, etc.

### **Data Sources**

In order to begin working on an assignment, you must know where to find the data and how to work with sources.

As you learned in Lesson 2, there are a number of data sources which you can use to collect data: internal and external partners, news sources, etc.

It is your job to identify data sources for the information you need.

### **Data Sources**

Refer to Lesson 2 for a listing of available data sources for each of the following three categories:

- Foundation-Level data
- State and Local Data
- Incident-Specific Data

## **Collecting Data**

Data is required for every geospatial product and the quality of the data collected impacts the overall value of the products produced. When collecting data, there are a number of considerations to keep in mind.

You should:

- Make sure data and metadata is accurate and current.
- Follow established data and metadata management standards.
- Properly protect licensed or sensitive data.
- Work closely with internal and external partners.

You will learn more about protecting sensitive data in Lesson 6.

### **Ensure that your data and metadata is accurate and current.**

As you learned in Lesson 2, although information can come from any number of sources, it is essential that you ensure that all information that you are collecting is cross-checked with authoritative data sources. This will ensure that the GIS products that are accurate and reliable.

In addition, you should always ensure that GIS products are consistently updated with current information.

### **Follow established data and metadata management standards.**

Anyone who has worked in a busy GIU supporting a large disaster knows that without some basic rules and standards, file shares and databases can quickly become an intractable realm of chaos. GIS offices usually require detailed documentation (metadata) and careful organization of data, but when deliverables are required twice daily, current to the hour, or when lives may be on the line, it is easy for disciplined focus on metadata to be lost and duplication of data and effort increase exponentially.

At minimum, metadata should include information on who created the data, when it was created, and a brief attribution description.

Strategies for addressing this challenge have been established. You should check with your supervisor to make sure you understand what standards you should follow.

### **Properly protect licensed or sensitive data from data sources**

You should ensure that all sensitive material is marked as such and is properly secured. You will learn more about protecting sensitive data in Lesson 6.

### **Work closely with internal and external partners**

As you learned in the previous lesson, information comes from a variety of sources, including interaction with others. In order to achieve greater situational awareness, you will want to maintain strong relationships with other agencies and individuals. This will help facilitate effective data sharing and ensure that everyone has a shared understanding of the incident.

### **GIS Products and Functional Areas**

The types of services and products you will be asked to produce will vary depending on the functional area you are working within.

Based on your interests, experiences, and skills, you may be assigned to work with any of the following functional areas:

- Operations Section
- Emergency Services Branch
- External Affairs
- Hazard Mitigation Branch
- Individual Assistance Branch
- Logistics Section
- Long-Term Community Recovery Branch
- Planning Section
- Public Assistance / Infrastructure Branch

#### **Operations Section**

- A GISP may provide high level information for decision makers, such as impacted area or status of critical infrastructure or grant programs.

#### **Emergency Services Branch**

- Provides critical support for meeting the Emergency Services Branch requirements, such as public health and medical or search and rescue activities

#### **External Affairs**

- Supports Community Relations, Public Information and External Affairs and Congressional Affairs

- Outreach products for the public (e.g. data distributions for public release,) will be coordinated from this team

#### **Hazard Mitigation Branch**

- Coordinates with subject matter experts (SMEs) and disciplinary experts for authoritative data and models to define incident areas
- Areas include NFIP, Floodplain, and the development of depth grids, SLOSH, etc.

#### **Individual Assistance Branch**

- Supports Evacuations, Mass Care, Sheltering Individual Assistance, Direct Housing Programs and Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs)
- Main products rely on data from the FEMA reports server for Individual Assistance registrations
- Special emphasis on tracking displaced populations is important for Response

#### **Logistics Section**

- A GISP may provide high level information for decision makers, such as impacted area or status of critical infrastructure or grant programs.

#### **Long-Term Community Recovery Branch**

- Focuses on damages and resources in housing, infrastructure/environment, and economy sectors
- Aims to re-establish a healthy, functioning community that will sustain itself over time

#### **Planning Section**

- Supports special projects, senior executive summary products and high-priority project requests, and special geographic reference products
- The Planning Section support lead will develop prototype projects for cyclic map requests used in daily Executive Briefings
- The Planning Specialist will integrate web map services for FEMA's situational awareness tools

#### **Public Assistance / Infrastructure Branch**

- Supports Infrastructure, Power, HAZMAT/Environmental Special Considerations and Debris mission
- Projects from ESF-3 and ESF-12 missions occur most frequently in Response
- Subject matter expertise in natural sciences as well as experience in civil engineering recommended

## **Types of GIS Requests**

In a large event, it is not uncommon for the GIU to support large numbers of simultaneous projects per Operational Period. As you just learned, the specific types of services and products you will be asked to provide depends on the functional area you work within, the type of disaster you are supporting, and the operational tempo.

In general, however, you will find that GIU production generally supports three types of GIS requests:

- Cyclic products at daily or operational period update cycles
- Intermittently updated products
- Ad hoc products

### **Cyclic products at daily or operational period update cycles**

- Cyclic products are during every operational period and are used during periods of operational activity that require constant shared situational awareness. They are usually required for every disaster and are often used within Executive Briefings. Cyclic products are the best candidates for integration with interactive web mapping through FEMA's situational awareness tools. They require a large amount of initial coordination to develop data and templates, and then they are updated regularly with little further development throughout the disaster. There may be a large number of these projects in the early stages of Response and Recovery, requiring significant resources to support.

### **Intermittently updated products**

- Intermittently updated products involve activity that is constant, though irregular. Map updates involve source data and formats that may be relatively unchanging, but require intermittent coordination for new revisions and updates. Some examples include the Declarations status map, and Damage Assessment maps. These projects require more coordination on the Geospatial unit side, as they are often the most common and can often 'evolve' and change as a mission support area progresses from Response to Recovery.

### **Ad hoc products**

- Ad hoc products will not require many revisions, and are designed for decision support, or unique issues which will change or be resolved. These are often 'one-time' projects which may involve significant focus for a short amount of time, and often have limited distribution. Alternatively, they may be reference products based on static information such as demographic or geographic data that are developed once.

## **Lesson Summary**

This lesson presented the following topics:

- Recognize how to check in to a Joint Field Office
- Identify how to gather information relevant to an assignment
- Identify the types of GIS products that need to be produced during a disaster

The next lesson explains how to respond to common requests for GIS services and products.