



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway
Administration

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Mandatory Use of MSAR
Application

Date: April 1, 2021

From: Timothy G. Hess, P.E.

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In Reply Refer To:
HFL-1

Office of Federal Lands Highway

To: Federal Lands Highway Division Directors

Cc: FLH Business Council
Jeff Mann
Sergio Mayorga

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you the Office of Federal Lands Highway (FLH) will require the mandatory, exclusive use of the Mobile Solution for Assessment and Reporting (MSAR) system as our system of record for the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program effective October 1, 2021. *This policy applies solely to FLH division offices and Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMA) eligible under the ERFO program.* A similar correspondence will be sent separately to all eligible FLMAs informing them of the new mandatory use requirement, with a copy to FLH division offices.

We are committed to transitioning to the enhanced MSAR as smoothly as possible by providing targeted training, user guides, more licenses, and, of course, user support at all levels *well in advance* of October 1st. To that end, we have included information supporting the transition. (See attachments)

The first attachment provides background information, implementation details, and key milestones that will support a seamless transition. I ask all FLH units to review the implementation framework and complete the tasks listed. The second attachment provides a template for new user profiles to support the issuance of licenses.

The use of MSAR serves as another example of how FLH is developing and applying innovations to make our programs and delivery more efficient and effective. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Sergio Mayorga, MSAR System Owner and FLH ERFO Program Manager, at 703-404-2642.

Background

The MSAR application is a cloud-based information system provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) used to collect and report post-disaster transportation information. It is an enterprise tool that enables the integration of mobile device technology, online forms, dashboard reporting, geospatial tracking, offline map viewing & reporting, and funds accountability. The system has two components including a mobile device function supporting the collection of disaster damage information by field personnel and a web-based portal for data storage and reporting.

Through MSAR and other similar technologies, FHWA saw the need for, and seized upon the opportunity to provide an integrated solution that supports people, communities, and transportation organizations to begin recovery following devastating disasters. Instead of using dispersed, outdated paper processes to complete damage assessments and approvals for the Emergency Relief Program, stakeholders can leverage secure mobile, web, and cloud technology to greatly improve response time, share information, and ensure data integrity. MSAR has been in use for over five years, first as a pilot and then in full implementation, to great success. During this period, agencies that have used MSAR have shown that it not only encourages and standardizes best practices but that it results in faster recovery and response with improved program administration.

Funding. Following extensive internal Headquarter coordination, FHWA determined MSAR licenses and future enhancements may be funded using ERFO program funds since FLH units support FLMAs' disaster recovery and program administration efforts. This is a unique authority to FLH and does not apply to the ER program including Federal-aid division offices and SDOT users.

Scope of "Mandatory Use"

Mandatory use means FLMAs, tribal governments, and FLH Division Offices on behalf of FLMAs, shall use MSAR exclusively to document damaged transportation facilities after an event has occurred. It is responsibility of the FLMA and tribal nations to assess the damage and to submit a Formal Notice of Intent. The Divisions must create an event in MSAR and direct the FLMA unit and/or tribal government to begin entering MSAR event information, e.g., description of the event, ERFO Disaster Damage Inspection Report (DDIR) for emergency repairs and/or permanent repair. This action will help the FLH division office's ERFO Coordinator evaluate damages and plan and coordinate a response to the event. This pre-assessment will also help to conduct and prepare a Disaster Assessment Report (DAR) which provides a recommendation to the FLH Division Director for either an affirmative or negative finding. Beginning October 1st, MSAR will serve as the system-of-record for the ERFO Program, therefore it is required that FLMAs, tribal governments, and FLH Division Office personnel use MSAR exclusively. The use of paper and/or excel-based files (DDIRR -excel form converted into pdf file) for data collection will no longer be permissible after October 1, 2021. Similarly, the MSAR cloud serves as the repository of ERFO documentation and data.

Note: All formal correspondence required by the ERFO Manual such as Notice of Intent (NOI), Acknowledge Letter, Affirmative Finding Letter, Program of Projects, will not be replaced. These key approvals will still be conducted via formal correspondence and all documentation must be uploaded to the Event Artifacts section in MSAR.

Next Steps

Following the approval by FHWA's Investment Review Board and Executive Director, MSAR started undergoing platform changes and enhancements to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. Over the next 2-3 months, FLH will launch the new MSAR version to production (currently being tested) including a new community license structure, user requested features, increased reporting, and ERFO funds accountability.

Preparatory Actions and Milestones

In order to prepare the system for a seamless transition, divisions are requested to complete, if not done already, the following:

- Incorporating (uploading) into MSAR all eligible active disaster data and information including Notice of Intent (NOI), Acknowledge Notice of Intent, Affirmative Finding (Positive Finding), ERFO Disaster Damage Inspection Reports (DDIR), Program of Project (POP) requests, and POP approvals, from beginning of fiscal year 2016 to present. Note: This transition strategy was discussed with ERFO Coordinators and Chiefs of Business Operations in 2019. *Suspense: September 1, 2021.*
- Conduct an inventory of User licenses for both FLH division staff and FLMA staff under your purview.
 - Provide the MSAR Project Manager with a list of: 1) existing licensed users and 2) projected new user licenses. In order to comply with FHWA IT Security requirements for new license submissions, please complete the User Profile template in attachment 2 for each user/license requested. *Suspense: April 9th*
 - Note: The confirmation of existing users coupled with new user templates will allow FLH to set-up/update user profiles, conduct targeted training, and address a range of logistical issues well in advance of October 1st. Following October 1st, new users will be added, and/or existing users will be removed on an as needed basis through direct coordination with the MSAR System Owner.
- HQs Milestones
 - March: Test new software release with a small group of users; fix bugs
 - April 1 -30, 2021 – “Go live” and new system training, finalize user/license lists, distribute new licenses per division and partners
 - May – July 2021 Dates TBD – Provide 2 web-based training sessions on MSAR including new enhancements and license structure; post written user instructions, Fact Sheets and other resource materials for broad distribution/use
 - August 2021 – Inform user base of pending new release date (TBD) of software into production
 - August/Sept (TBD): Release new version into production
 - October 1, 2021 – Mandatory use policy is effective

Future MSAR Governance Process

Following the release of the next MSAR software version and its release to production, all future inquiries should be directed to the MSAR System Owner. He/she (currently Sergio Mayorga) will manage:

- ✓ license usage/requests,
- ✓ requests for future enhancements,
- ✓ troubleshooting concerns,
- ✓ the need for patches against existing software,
- ✓ the MSAR Support Hotline in coordination with the Office of Administration and,
- ✓ manage/deliver future training requests.

The MSAR System Owner will work closely and regularly with FLH division offices' ERFO Coordinators, Tribal Transportation Program ERFO Coordinator, and FLMAs to monitor the effectiveness of the MSAR system and facilitate its continued improvement.