



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

April 1, 2021

In Reply Refer To:
HFPD-1

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

From: Timothy G. Hess
Associate Administrator
Office of Federal Lands Highway

To: Federal Land Management Agencies

Subject: Mobile Solution for Assessment and Reporting (MSAR) Application

Dear Colleague,

After testing and deploying the MSAR application with many of you, we are excited to announce the MSAR system will be the exclusive 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.* We are committed to transitioning to the mandatory use of the enhanced MSAR as smoothly as possible by providing targeted training, user guides, more licenses, and, user support at all levels *well in advance* of October 1st.

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, 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 Instead of using dispersed, outdated paper processes to complete damage assessments, e.g., Detail Damage Inspection Reports (DDIR), and the approval processes for the Emergency Relief Program,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. We wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank you for your agency's participation and feedback as we collaboratively developed and deployed this tool. Agencies

that have used MSAR have shown that it not only encourages and standardizes best practices but it results in faster recovery and response with improved program administration.

The attachment provides background information, implementation details, and key milestones that will support a seamless transition.

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 there are any questions, please contact Mr. Sergio Mayorga, FLTP National Program Manager at (202) 853-0810 or sergio.mayorga@dot.gov

Sincerely,

TIMOTHY G. HESS

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Timothy G. Hess
Associate Administrator
Office of Federal Lands Highway

Cc:

Monique Evans, EFL Division Director
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Kevin McLaury, WFL Division Director
Scott Johnson, Director of FLH Programs

Implementation Information

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 the responsibility of the FLMAs and tribal governments to assess the damage and to submit a Formal Notice of Intent. The Divisions will create an event in MSAR and direct the FLMA unit and/or BIA for tribal government to begin entering into 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 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, etc., 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.

Preparatory Actions, Milestones, and Next Steps

MSAR is undergoing platform changes and enhancements to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. Over the next 2-3 months, FLH will launch the new MSAR software version to production. This new release follows a testing period currently underway with a small number of stakeholders, including partners. The new release includes a new community license structure, user requested features, increased reporting, and ERFO funds accountability.

In order to prepare the system for a seamless transition with our partners, the following actions and milestones have been identified:

- 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 DDIRs (DSR), Program of Project (POP) requests, and POP approvals, from beginning of fiscal year 2016 to present. Note: This transition strategy is led by FLH Division Offices and FLH Headquarters only. *We will be seeking partners’ assistance to validate the data loaded into the MSAR cloud.*
- Conduct an inventory of user licenses for both FLH division staff and FLMA/tribal government staff.
 - We offer two options for your consideration.
 - Option 1 - FLH division offices will be asked to contact their FLMA field counterparts to validate the need for existing MSAR licenses issued and to solicit any new user license requirements. This information will be compiled and forwarded to the MSAR System Owner and FLMA HQs POC.

- Option 2 – FLH will work through the FLMA HQs office(s) only and allow you to coordinate the outreach with your field units. The FLMA HQs POC will then compile the information and provide it to the MSAR System Owner who will then forward to the division offices. Please communicate which option you prefer to the MSAR System Owner. The suspense for this activity is 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.
- FLH HQs Milestones – For partners’ situational awareness
 - 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 software and license inquiries should be directed to the MSAR System Owner. He/she (currently Sergio Mayorga) will manage and oversee:

- ✓ 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.