

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLANNING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This directive establishes policy for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that VA takes necessary actions to identify and mitigate the impacts of climate change and incorporate an adaptation strategy into day-to-day decision-making and long-term planning processes. This directive also establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for planning and implementing strategies to minimize the impacts of climate change while continuing to care for America's Veterans.

2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive sets forth VA policy and responsibilities related to climate change adaptation planning. It contains information on the following:

a. Policy statements regarding VA's commitment to assessing the impact of climate change on its operations and assets.

b. Planning and implementing strategies to minimize the impacts of climate change while carrying out its mission to serve America's Veterans.

c. Responsibilities of VA Administrations and staff offices to implement the requirements of this directive.

3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Assistant Secretary for Management (004), Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044), Green Management Program Service (044E).

4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** None.

5. **RELATED HANDBOOK:** None.

6. **RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/
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VA CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICY

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. The goal of the Green Management Program Service within VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM) is to lead the Department in becoming sustainable. This supports the mission by making more resources available for Veterans' care and optimizing VA stewardship of public resources. VA recognizes that climate change will impact agency services, operations, programs, and assets and has broad national security implications. The purpose of this directive is to commit VA to assess and respond to the challenges that a changing climate poses. This policy directive will enhance VA's ability to serve and honor America's Veterans in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13514.

b. This directive establishes Department policy and responsibilities for VA Administrations and staff offices to evaluate and plan for the impacts of climate change.

c. The provisions of this directive apply to all Administrations and staff offices, including those located in leased space. Each Administration and staff office shall ensure that all subordinate organizations are aware of and comply with this directive.

2. POLICY

a. VA's goal in climate change adaptation planning is to ensure continuing execution of the Department's mission. VA will enhance mission delivery by evaluating, planning for, and adapting to climate change impacts. To this end:

(1) VA will assess and respond to the challenges that a changing climate poses to our ability to serve and honor America's Veterans;

(2) VA will adopt the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force Guiding Principles, which will inform the Department's adaptation strategy; and

(3) The best available scientific data will be used in VA planning.

b. All Administrations and staff offices will explicitly integrate adaptation considerations and planning into existing decision-making processes and activities by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2014. This integration will ensure our mission continues to be successfully accomplished. Climate change adaptation planning will include:

(1) A vulnerability assessment, based on the best available scientific data to be completed by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2012. The vulnerability assessment will identify sensitivity to climate change impacts and organizational capacity to adapt to both short- and long-term climate impacts. Administration and staff office vulnerability assessments will be based on the VA high-level assessment linked to <http://vaww.green.va.gov/>. The assessments shall be submitted to the Assistant Secretary for Management, Senior Sustainability Officer (SSO) by September 30, 2012.

(2) Identification of climate change impacts that require most rapid mitigation response. Prioritize mitigation requirements based on the identified organizational vulnerability and the mission risk due to that vulnerability;

(3) Identification of existing or new mitigation strategies or programs to address the impacts of highest concern by the end of FY 2013; and

(4) Monitoring and review. The vulnerability assessments, impacts, and mitigation strategies will be reviewed by each Administration and staff office on an annual basis and updated as determined by the owner. Review results shall be submitted to the SSO.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

VA recognizes that the responsibility for successful climate change adaptation planning lies with each VA Administration and staff office. This section outlines the responsibilities and business processes for specific offices/officials.

a. **Deputy Secretary.** The Deputy Secretary is responsible for:

(1) Establishing a strong expectation that climate change adaptation planning occurs at all appropriate organizational levels to meet the goals of this policy; and

(2) Identifying program offices and resources within the agency to support the adaptation planning process.

b. **Assistant Secretary for Management.** The Assistant Secretary for Management establishes the overall policy and guidelines to implement a climate change adaptation strategy within the Department and is responsible for:

(1) Overseeing the development and implementation of procedures and processes related to climate change adaptation planning;

(2) Incorporating climate change adaptation planning into high-level VA business practices.

(3) Coordinating adaptation planning across Administrations and staff offices to ensure climate change adaptation issues are addressed in a consistent manner; and

(4) Monitoring VA's activities to implement adaptation planning and reporting progress to the Secretary of VA, the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Federal Environmental Executive, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other applicable entities as needed.

c. **Director of OAEM.** The Director of OAEM is responsible for:

(1) Assisting with collection of existing and emerging scientific data, including the probabilities that climate change impacts will occur as envisioned by CEQ, and providing subject matter expertise and data to assist Administrations and staff offices;

(2) Defining the VA Guidelines for climate change adaptation planning; reviewing and updating the climate change adaptation policy as necessary;

(3) Collaborating with other agencies to facilitate the sharing of best practices in adaptation policy and planning;

(4) Facilitating introductions among technical peers at VA and other organizations to share best practices;

(5) Reviewing plans, mitigations, and updates developed by Administrations and staff offices; and

(6) Coordinating the submission of required climate change adaptation reports to CEQ, Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), OMB, and other applicable entities as needed.

d. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials. Each Administration and staff office is best positioned to determine how to integrate climate adaptation into its own planning and processes. Administrations and staff offices will have flexibility to develop their adaptation plan in a manner consistent and compatible with their own circumstances and objectives. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Directors of staff offices are responsible for the following:

(1) Meeting the timeline for climate change adaptation planning as specified in section 3.b;

(2) Providing policy, guidance, and oversight on integrating climate change adaptation planning into existing Administration or staff office business practices. These business practices include, but are not limited to, emergency management planning and capital investment planning;

(3) Ensuring appropriate and sufficient staffing and resources to support climate change adaptation planning;

(4) Fulfilling climate change adaptation planning requirements at the Administration- or staff office-level per VA policy;

(5) Providing all appropriate personnel with guidance and training on climate change impacts and adaptation planning; and

(6) Responding to reporting requirements and information requests for climate change adaptation-related reports and information requested by the CEQ, OMB, OFEE, OAEM, and other entities as needed.

4. REFERENCES

a. Executive Order (EO) 13514 Section 8(i) directs agencies to evaluate climate change risks and vulnerabilities to manage the effects of climate change on the agency's operations and mission in both the short and long term. A complete list of all environmental EOs can be found through the National Archives at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/disposition.html>.

b. The *Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation Planning Implementing Instructions* and the accompanying *Support Document* were issued by CEQ in March 2011. The instructions

identify how the Federal agencies should respond to adaptation planning requirements under EO 13514.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/adaptation_final_implementing_instructions_3_3.pdf

- c. VA high-level assessment – linked to this intranet page: <http://vaww.green.va.gov/>
- d. VA Directive 0320, Comprehensive Emergency Management Program.