

Power During Crisis

Trace how federal, state, and local authority operates in an emergency.

12.G1b "The Constitution created a unique political system that distributes powers and responsibilities among three different branches of government at the federal level and between state and federal governments..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline responsibilities. Circle the branch or government level involved. Mark one check on power.

Who Acts After a Hurricane?

- ① Hurricane recovery illustrates divided authority. Congress can fund disaster aid and establish federal program rules. The president directs executive agencies carrying out those laws. Federal courts decide properly presented cases about statutory or constitutional compliance. Separate responsibilities coexist with checks: Congress oversees executive action, presidents may veto bills, and courts can review challenged government actions. No branch has unlimited authority.
- ② Federalism divides authority between national and state governments. States exercise broad powers over education and public safety, subject to constitutional limits and valid federal laws. A state legislature may fund recovery; a governor directs state agencies; state courts interpret and apply law. Local governments derive powers from state constitutions and statutes. They may manage evacuation routes, permits, and emergency services. Valid federal law prevails over conflicting state law, but federal officials do not therefore control every local decision.
- ③ Suppose a city imposes an emergency curfew and residents challenge it. State law defines the city's authority, while constitutional protections constrain its actions. State courts can hear state-law claims and many federal constitutional claims. Federal courts can hear cases within their jurisdiction, including qualifying federal constitutional disputes. Court access and outcomes depend on legal rules and facts, not simply the label "federal" or "local." The system combines local response, state responsibility, and national protections, while disputes about authority remain possible.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What responsibility does the passage assign to each federal branch during or after a disaster?

2 According to the passage, where do local governments get their authority, and why is that authority not independent?

3 When does federal law prevail over state law, according to the passage?

4 Could a constitutional challenge to the curfew arise in state court or federal court? Explain the passage's qualification.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

For a drinking-water emergency, describe one action each by Congress, a federal agency, and local government. Add one legal or institutional check on each action.

ACTOR	ACTION	CHECK OR LIMIT

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline responsibilities. Circle the branch or government level involved. Mark one check on power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What responsibility does the passage assign to each federal branch during or after a disaster?	Congress appropriates aid money and sets program rules. The president directs federal agencies and coordinates the response. Federal courts decide lawsuits about compliance with the Constitution or statutes.
2	According to the passage, where do local governments get their authority, and why is that authority not independent?	Local governments get authority from state law. State constitutions and state statutes define and can limit their powers.
3	When does federal law prevail over state law, according to the passage?	Federal law prevails when a valid federal law conflicts with state law.
4	Could a constitutional challenge to the curfew arise in state court or federal court? Explain the passage's qualification.	State courts hear many federal constitutional claims as well as state-law claims. Federal courts hear qualifying federal disputes within their jurisdiction; legal rules and facts matter.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

ACTOR	ACTION	CHECK OR LIMIT
Congress	Funds water testing	Presidential veto or constitutional review in a case.
Federal agency	Administers aid under federal law	Must follow the statute and Constitution.
Local government	Warns residents and distributes safe water	Acts within state-granted powers and constitutional limits.

Accept plausible actions and meaningful checks for all three actors. Distinguish separation of federal branches from federalism, and do not assume federal courts alone can decide federal constitutional questions.