

the FOUNDATION FOR
INFRASTRUCTURE RESILIENCE

The Resilient Community

An Introduction

Foundation for Infrastructure Resilience

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Foundation for Infrastructure Resilience, Inc. ("FIR"™), a non-profit 501(c) (3) Delaware Corporation.

Our Vision

A secure and prosperous future where resilient and sustainable critical infrastructure empowers communities and safeguards our nation.

Our Mission

Improve the quality of life and help ensure the continuity of the United States by facilitating sustainable communities and resilient critical infrastructures, fortified against threats and meeting the needs of the 21st century.

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FIR Book 3: The Resilient Community — An Introduction

How a community governs, feeds, protects, and sustains itself through a prolonged event — lawfully, and only for as long as it must.

Foundation for Infrastructure Resilience — Book 3 of the FIR introductory set. Draft of November 3, 2026.

About this book set, and who it is for

The FIR introductory set is written for people who are new to all of this. It assumes no background in emergency management, infrastructure, the military, or finance — only an interest in why a long loss of the electric grid would be so dangerous, and what can be done about it. Each term is introduced in plain words the first time it matters, and the companion *FIR Field Handbook* holds the full glossary for anything you want to look up again.

These five short books are introductions, not the full course. Each one gives a clear overview of its part of the FIR method — enough to understand it, plan with it, and know where the detail lives — but it is not a substitute for the FIR courses, which remain the version of record for instruction. A later, more detailed textbook set will carry the complete student-guide content; these introductions are the on-ramp to it. The four Foundation courses (BSE 099–102) and the free member orientation (FIR 001) cost nothing to start — browse every course and enroll at the FIR course catalog.

The set is built to be read in order:

- **Book 1, Foundations** — the problem: what a Black Sky Event is, how a community is built, who and what threatens it, and what a household can do. Everyone starts here.
- **Book 2, The Assessment Method** — how a trained assessor measures a community's readiness and turns it into a plan that can be funded.
- **Book 3, The Resilient Community** — what a community that has done the work looks like in a prolonged event: how it governs, feeds, protects, and sustains itself.
- **Book 4, The Certification Path** — how that readiness is independently verified and credentialed: the evidence standard, the Diamond Blue certification, and the people qualified to sign it.
- **Book 5, The Domains** — how each kind of infrastructure is actually hardened, sector by sector.

This is Book 3. It assumes you have read Book 1 and will make the most sense after it. It is written for everyone a Black Sky Event would touch — residents, community leaders, and officials at every level — because building a resilient community is work that belongs to all of them. The hardest questions it raises — legal authority, the use of force, local money — are named here and then routed to the people qualified to answer them: a community's own attorney and the FIR governance courses.

About this book

Book 1 ended on a promise it did not yet fully explain. It said the goal is a community that can "operate as a functioning limited society" through a grid-down event that lasts weeks or months — but it never showed what that looks like. This book is the answer. It describes the community on the far side of the work: how it holds order when normal authority is thin, how it feeds and protects its people, how it keeps a local economy running when money and supply chains stop, and how it hands everything back when the outside world returns. While this book provides a solid conceptual overview, the real details needed to implement its concepts are in the actual FIR courses.

Two cautions run through every chapter. First, everything here is lawful, civilian-led, and temporary. The structures a community stands up in a crisis are meant to be time-boxed to the emergency and dissolved when it ends — not a new permanent order. Second, the hardest questions — who may use force, who holds authority, whether a local currency is legal — are not an assessor's or an author's to answer. This book names them plainly and routes them to a community's attorney and to the governance courses (the GOV series and BSE 306) where they are worked in full.

How this book is organized

The seven chapters move from what resilience means, through the people and the order that hold a community together, to the physical and economic machinery that sustains it, and finally to the agreements that connect a community to its neighbors and the way it returns to normal. Chapter 1 — what "resilient" actually means. Chapter 2 — the human foundation: people and lawful order. Chapter 3 — keeping order under stress. Chapter 4 — the Consolidation Framework. Chapter 5 — feeding and sustaining the community. Chapter 6 — the local economy in transition. Chapter 7 — agreements before the event, and the way back.

Chapter 1 — What "resilient" actually means

"Resilient" is one of those words that has been used so often it can stop meaning anything. In the FIR method it has a specific, demanding meaning: a resilient community is one that can hold its own infrastructure stack — keep its people alive, fed, safe, and organized — through a prolonged grid-down event, with no outside help, and then rejoin the wider nation when help returns.

Not a fortress, and not independent

Two misunderstandings are worth clearing up at the start. A resilient community is not a fortress that shuts the gates and goes it alone. It is a node in a network — it can hold on its own, and it has agreed in writing, before any crisis, to help the neighbors it is tied to and to be helped by them. And a resilient community is not independent. The phrase FIR uses is "islanded, not independent": it can run as an island for a time, but the goal is always to reconnect, not to secede. Local resilience is necessary for the nation to survive a Black Sky Event, and it is never sufficient by itself. It is the building block a region and a nation reassemble from.

The measure: a functioning limited society

Book 1 introduced the top of the FIR scoring ladder, Diamond Blue, and said it requires more than hardened infrastructure — it requires a demonstrated ability to "operate as a functioning limited society." This book is a description of that society. The measure behind it is days of supply, written as Diamond-N: how many days the community can sustain its people under its tightest constraint, counting every category of consumable at once. FIR treats fourteen days as marginal, thirty as adequate, and sixty as resilient — always checked against a credible bridge to local production, because stored supply only buys the time to start making more.

The guardrails, stated once

Because the rest of this book describes a community governing and protecting itself, it is worth stating the limits plainly, here, before the details. Authority stays civilian, elected, and accountable. Every emergency structure is voluntary to join and time-boxed to the emergency. Local courts keep working from the first day. And the whole arrangement is built to be dissolved and handed back when state and federal government reconstitute. A resilient community is not a smaller, tougher country. It is an ordinary community that has planned how to keep itself lawful and alive through an extraordinary stretch of time.

Chapter 2 — The human foundation: people and lawful order

Book 1 put two human tiers beneath energy at the bottom of the dependency stack: Tier 0H, the people who run everything, and Tier 0S, security, governance, and the rule of law. They are the deepest foundation because nothing above them recovers if they fail. This chapter is about building them on purpose.

Tier 0H: keeping people able to stay

Every sector runs on people, and almost all of those people have families (or households). In a prolonged crisis they will protect their families first — that is the attrition spiral from Book 1, and it sets the ceiling on every recovery. The community's answer is not to demand that operators abandon their households; it is to make it possible for them to serve by seeing that their households are provided for. A plan that keeps the water operator's family fed and safe is what keeps the water on. This is why household readiness, the subject of Book 1's Chapter 5, is treated as community infrastructure, not private virtue.

Tier 0S: why legitimate authority comes first

When the normal signals of authority go quiet — no news, no clear word from the state capital, no obvious person in charge — the most dangerous vacuum is not a shortage of water or fuel. It is a shortage of legitimate authority. Infrastructure that no one has the recognized right to govern becomes something to be fought over rather than something to be restored. So the first thing a resilient community builds is not a wall or a warehouse. It is a clear, lawful answer to the question "who decides?"

The governance council

FIR's answer is a governance council: an accountable civilian body, created and legitimated by an ordinance passed before any crisis, that holds the community's emergency authorities. The timing matters more than almost anything else in this book. Authority that is written down and adopted in calm times is legitimate when it is needed; authority improvised in a panic may be questionable, and everyone knows it. The council sits above the security function — security answers to civilian government, never the reverse — and it operates under standing limits set in the same ordinance: membership is voluntary, authority is civilian and elected and accountable, every structure is time-boxed to the emergency, and the local courts function from the first day. These are not optional niceties. They are what separates lawful community government under stress from something no one should want to build.

Chapter 3 — Keeping order under stress

Order is the quiet precondition for everything else — you cannot distribute water fairly or run a clinic in a place that is not safe. But "keeping order" is also where a community can do the most harm to itself if it reaches for too much, too fast. FIR's doctrine is built to reach for the least force that works, and to give it back as soon as possible.

The Order-Under-Stress ladder

FIR describes four rungs of authority for keeping order, arranged from the least disruptive to the most, and the rule is to climb only as high as the situation truly requires. The first rung is the ordinary civil courts, working as they always do. The second is the sheriff, with the long-standing legal tools of the posse and the unorganized militia. The third is the governor's National Guard, operating under civilian command. The fourth, and the last resort, is a narrowly time-boxed martial law. Each rung is subordinate to civilian authority, each is time-boxed, and every one of them reverts fully the moment normal government reconnects. The ladder exists so that a community reaches for the mildest rung that holds, and never treats the top of the ladder as the default.

Where exactly the legal lines fall on each rung — what a sheriff may lawfully do, what a posse is and is not, when a governor may act — is a question for a community's attorney and for the governance courses, not for this book. What this book insists on is the posture: least force, civilian control, time limits, full reversion.

The warden network and the watch

Underneath the ladder sits the everyday structure that most communities will actually use: a warden network. These are block and neighborhood civil-defense wardens — the distributed form of Tier 0S and the council's reach to the street. In a consolidated posture (Chapter 4) the same people take rotated civic security duty, a night watch and a day ward, a practice old enough to be named in the Statute of Winchester in 1285. The point of the warden network is that order is mostly kept by known neighbors doing ordinary, visible duty, not by anything dramatic.

Protecting the most vulnerable

One structure deserves its own mention because it is easy to get wrong. A sanctuary zone is a designated area where the most vulnerable people — the sick, the very young, the elderly — are concentrated under the community's strongest protection, and from which weapons are excluded except for designated security. It is a commitment that the community's first duty is to the people least able to protect themselves. How detention, the use of force, and similar hard questions are handled anywhere in the community is routed, as a matter of doctrine, to legal counsel before it is written into any plan.

Chapter 4 — The Consolidation Framework

Most of the time, a community is best served by keeping services spread out where people live. But there is a point in a severe, prolonged event where distributed services can no longer be protected or sustained, and the community is safer gathered than scattered. The plan for that is the Consolidation Framework, and like the governance ordinance, its whole value is that it is assembled in advance.

Contracting to a consolidation point

A consolidation point is a pre-designated, hardenable structure or area that the population contracts toward when the threat exceeds what distributed capability can handle — a known place, chosen and prepared in calm times, not improvised under pressure. The decision to move to it is governed by a trigger the community sets ahead of time, called Harvest Before the Siege: a threat-triggered protocol that shifts the community from its peacetime readiness posture to its crisis posture before the crisis closes in, not after.

The pieces, in plain terms

The Framework is a named set of parts, and the names are old on purpose — this is ancient, well-understood civic practice, not invention. The Wall is the defensible perimeter the community consolidates within. The Gate is the small number of controlled access points where everyone entering is registered, screened, and triaged. The Keep is the most hardened facility inside the perimeter, holding the community's strategic reserve — the supplies that buy time and are never handed out in bulk. Water Inside the Walls is a siting rule: water treatment and distribution, and every other critical node, belong inside or right against the perimeter, not outside it. The Commons are the shared resources the council governs for the whole community — water, the land inside the perimeter, fuel, communications — planned to last the expected duration. And the Sanctuary, from the last chapter, sits inside all of it.

Together these make up the named, scored artifact that the Diamond Blue rubric looks for. A community does not have to want to use them to need to have planned them. The plan is what makes the difference between an orderly consolidation and a desperate one.

Chapter 5 — Feeding and sustaining the community

A community that has kept order still has to eat, and keep eating, for a length of time no ordinary stockpile covers. Sustainment is measured against the tightest constraint — the first category of supply to run out sets the clock for the whole community — and the goal is always to bridge from stored supply to local production before the stores are gone.

From the Keep, then by posted price

When a crisis begins, the community does not run straight to a market. Under the council's written plan, there is a period of free issue: provisions from the Keep are issued to every resident, without condition, for a stated term. This keeps everyone alive through the first shock and keeps panic down. When that term ends, the community moves to posted prices — prices that are asked, posted openly, and honored as posted, never quietly moved against whoever is most desperate. The shift from free issue to posted prices is planned in advance so that no one has to invent it in the moment.

Guilds and the tithe

The work of a community in a long crisis gets organized into guilds: task forces built around a single function — water, food, medical, security, power — each with defined membership, its own training and quality standards, and a voice in governance. A guild is how a community makes sure that the people doing critical work are trained, accountable, and represented, rather than self-appointed. Alongside the guilds runs the tithe: the civic-contribution obligation, functionally a local tax paid not in cash but in labor, supplies, or skills, and credited back to the contributor. The tithe is how the community's shared work gets shared fairly.

Sustaining to the bridge

All of this is in service of one number: how many days the community can go, and whether it can start producing before it runs out. The Keep buys the first stretch of time. Guilds and the Commons stretch it. Local production — gardens, local water, whatever the community can make for itself — is what turns a countdown into something a community can actually survive. A high days-of-supply figure with no plan to produce is just a slower countdown; the plan to produce is what makes it resilience. For communities that will have a production deficit, pre-event agreements and alignment with sister communities to barter or trade in goods and services can be a solution. The urban center with the advanced hospital and certain manufacturing capacity can trade for harvested crops, etc.

Chapter 6 — The local economy in transition

When the grid is down for weeks, the things that make money work — card networks, banks, cash deliveries, open stores — stop too. A community still has to move goods, reward work, and settle debts. FIR's doctrine for this is deliberately modest and deliberately temporary: keep exchange working through the crisis in the simplest honest way, and convert back to the national economy the moment it returns.

The progression

The transition runs through a planned sequence, each step used only as long as it is needed. It begins with cash, while cash still works. It moves to free issue from the Keep, described in the last chapter, through the first shock. As normal supply fails, the community turns to a credit ledger: a public book of household and guild accounts, credited when someone delivers goods or labor and debited when they receive them — a plain, open record of who has given and who has received. Only if the crisis runs long might a community issue scrip: locally issued paper, good among the people who agree to accept it. And when the outside world returns, there is a conversion: prices, wages, and obligations are re-stated in national currency as it resumes.

The honesty the money depends on

Two lines keep this lawful and trustworthy, and they are not negotiable. Scrip is not legal tender, and it is never represented as such — it is a local convenience, not a currency a community has any right to mint. And because the legality of a local instrument, and the way it should be issued and retired, are genuinely hard legal questions, FIR routes them off its own desk entirely: how scrip is designed, issued, and retired is the subject of a dedicated governance course (GOV 113), and whether any of it is lawful in a given place is a question for a community's attorney. This book describes the idea so a community understands it; it does not tell a community to do it.

Arranged before the event

The most useful economic move happens long before any crisis: contingent procurement, a pre-event agreement with a nearby supplier that carries its own triggers, priorities, payment terms, delivery, and duration — negotiated and signed, with counsel's review, while everyone is calm and the lawyers are available. A supply line arranged in advance is worth more than any amount of improvising once the trucks have stopped.

Chapter 7 — Agreements before the event, and the way back

The last chapter is the one that keeps a resilient community from becoming an isolated fortress it hopes to avoid. It is about two connections: to the neighbors a community will lean on during a crisis, and to the nation it rejoins afterward.

Mutual aid, in writing, in advance

A resilient community is defined partly by what it has promised its neighbors. Before any event, the communities in a region sign written mutual-aid agreements: who will send what to whom, under what conditions, paid or credited how. Written, in advance, is the whole point — a handshake in a crisis is worth little, and a signed agreement made in calm times is worth a great deal. A cluster of communities held together by these agreements is stronger than any one of them walled off alone. This is the "network, not a fortress" idea from Book 1, made concrete.

The federated bridge

A community does not have to wait for a national plan to begin. It can act locally now, with what it controls, and design everything it builds to merge upward later into a regional or national framework when one exists. Local action is necessary, and it is never wasted — but it is also never sufficient by itself. The prioritizing of which communities and which strategic nodes matter most is work that only a region, a state, or the nation can do; the community's job is to be a building block that is ready to be assembled.

The accountability horizon, and giving it back

Every emergency structure in this book — the council's extra authorities, the Order-Under-Stress ladder, the consolidation posture, the ledger and the scrip — is built to end. FIR calls the moment it ends the accountability horizon: the point at which state and federal government reconstitute and the community's crisis decisions come back under normal review. At that horizon the community converts its local economy back to national currency, stands down its time-boxed authorities, and accounts for what it did. A resilient community is measured not only by how well it held together through the dark stretch, but by how cleanly it handed everything back when the lights came on.

That is the whole arc of the FIR method, across all three books: understand the threat, measure and plan against it, and build a community that can carry its own people through a prolonged event — lawfully, temporarily, and always on its way back to the nation it belongs to.

Appendices

The reference material for this book — the glossary of record, the course field cards, and the sources — is gathered in the companion *FIR Field Handbook* rather than repeated here, so that one document stays the single source of record. The governance, consolidation, and local-economy terms used above are defined there in full, with the courses that own them (principally the GOV series and BSE 306). Where this book and the Handbook ever differ on a definition, the Handbook governs; where either differs from the online courses on instruction, the course governs, and the difference should be reported for correction.

Take the next step

This book is a free introduction. To learn the method in full — and to earn FIR's credentials — take the courses, which are the version of record for instruction. The governance, consolidation, and local-economy material in this book is taught in depth in the GOV courses (GOV 106, 107, and 108, then GOV 110 through 113 and GOV 210) and in BSE 306. Whatever your path, the four Foundation courses (BSE 099, 101, 102, and 100) and the free member orientation (FIR 001) are the place to start, and they cost nothing. Browse every course and enroll at the FIR course catalog, and learn more about FIR at fir.foundation.