

DRRA

BUILDING FASTER. BUILDING SMARTER.

DISASTER **RECOVERY** **REFORM** **ACT**



**HOUSE
TRANSPORT**





DISASTER RECOVERY REFORM ACT (DRRA)

H.R. 4460, the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA), is bipartisan legislation that addresses the rising costs of disasters in the United States, and reforms federal disaster programs to ensure our communities are better prepared for future hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, wildfires, and other disasters.

This legislation particularly focuses on improving predisaster planning and mitigation, which will reduce the future loss of life and the rising costs of disasters throughout America. Furthermore, the

DRRA incentivizes building and rebuilding better and smarter to facilitate speedy recovery efforts whenever and wherever disaster does strike.

Strengthening mitigation practices is also a wise use of taxpayer dollars; for every \$1 spent in mitigation, between \$4 and \$8 is saved in avoided disaster recovery costs. That is why this bipartisan bill is a vital response to a severe 2017 hurricane season. We can encourage better building to save lives and taxpayer money in the future.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates the federal government's efforts

in preparing for, mitigating against, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters and emergencies, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

According to numerous studies, disaster losses and federal disaster spending have increased significantly over the last 50 years. For example, one report has found that between 1980 and 2011, North America suffered \$1.06 trillion in total losses. Another study found that since 1952, the cost of natural disasters to the federal government more than tripled as a function of gross domestic product.

As the 2017 hurricane season has demonstrated, the toll in both human lives and economic impacts can be devastating. While no one wants another such hurricane season, this year has provided data that can be used to improve federal disaster programs.

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act takes lessons learned from this hurricane season and other recent disasters to help American communities better prepare for, withstand, and recover from the next disaster. By encouraging more cost-effective and smart investment of taxpayer dollars before disaster strikes, the bill will help save lives and reduce federal, state, and local costs in the long run.

IMPORTANCE OF MITIGATION

A major focus of the DRRRA is strengthening disaster mitigation – actions taken proactively to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of future disasters.

Effective mitigation minimizes the potential loss of life and property from a disaster based on identifying and understanding the risks in a given area or community. Mitigation can encompass a wide variety of activities, including preparation and planning, elevating or moving structures prone to flooding, and hardening structures to mitigate effects of hurricanes or earthquakes.

Placing greater federal, state, and local emphasis on mitigation will:

- Save lives;
- Minimize damage to property;
- Reduce disaster costs; and
- Save taxpayers money.

For example, the Disaster Recovery Reform Act:

- Incentivizes states and tribal governments to take steps that increase disaster resilience in our communities and to invest in mitigation;
- Reforms FEMA and the Stafford Act by ensuring that a percentage of assistance provided in the wake of disasters is invested in predisaster hazard mitigation; and
- Speeds recovery by getting structures inspected faster.

This bill also deals with other critical issues such as wildfire prevention, eligibility for disaster assistance, and agency efficiency and accountability.



DISASTER RECOVERY REFORM ACT OF 2017

Section 1: Short title; table of contents

This section designates the short title as the “Disaster Recovery Reform Act.”

TITLE I: DISASTER MITIGATION

Section 101. National public infrastructure predisaster hazard mitigation

This section amends the Stafford Act to modify the predisaster hazard mitigation grant program.

Section 102. Additional mitigation activities

This section clarifies the activities eligible for hazard mitigation assistance under the Stafford Act.

Section 103. Wildfire prevention

This section assists states affected by wildfires with hazard mitigation assistance.

Section 104. Additional activities

This section clarifies that activities that help reduce the risk of future damage, hardship, loss, or suffering in any area affected by a wildfire are eligible for hazard mitigation assistance.

TITLE II: DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Section 201. Federal cost-share adjustments for repair, restoration, and replacement of damaged facilities

This section provides incentives to states and tribal governments for investments that increase disaster resilience.

Section 202. Eligibility for code implementation and enforcement

This section clarifies the eligibility of surge code enforcers for disaster assistance to facilitate disaster recovery.

Section 203. Program improvements

This section makes clarifications to improve various Stafford Act programs.

Section 204. Prioritization of facilities

This section prioritizes assistance to special needs facilities.

Section 205. Guidance on evacuation routes

This section requires FEMA and the Federal Highway Administration to develop guidance on evacuation routes.

Section 206. Proof of insurance

This section allows for the encumbrance of a deed to qualify as meeting the proof of insurance requirement for states.

Section 207. Duplication of benefits

This section allows for the President to waive Section 312 of the Stafford Act in consultation with the other agency whose assistance is duplicated. It also allows hazard mitigation assistance, under certain circumstances, to be used for certain federally authorized water resource development projects.

Section 208. State administration of assistance for direct temporary housing and permanent housing construction

This section authorizes states to use federal disaster assistance to directly administer temporary and permanent housing assistance for disaster victims.

Section 209. Assistance to individuals and households

This section amends the Stafford Act to increase the amount of assistance available to individuals with disabilities.

Section 210. Multifamily lease and repair assistance

This section amends the Stafford Act to allow greater flexibility and options for housing disaster victims.

Section 211. Federal disaster assistance nonprofit fairness

This section clarifies the eligibility of community centers, including houses of worship, for federal disaster assistance.

Section 212. Management costs

This section amends the Stafford Act to establish fixed rates to reimburse states and local governments for direct and indirect administrative costs incurred to implement disaster recovery projects.

Section 213. Flexibility

This section allows certain disaster assistance debts to be waived if such assistance was distributed based on an error by FEMA, there was no fault on behalf of the debtor, and the collection of the debt would be against equity and good conscience.

Section 214. Additional disaster assistance

This section will help improve the economic recovery of regions affected by hurricanes and other disasters.

Section 215. National veterinary emergency teams

This section establishes a pilot program for veterinarians to accompany urban search and rescue teams to take care of the search and rescue of canines and to provide guidance to communities on pet care and sheltering during disasters.

TITLE III: AGENCY MANAGEMENT, OVERSIGHT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Section 301. Unified Federal environmental and historic preservation review

This section requires the FEMA Administrator to review the expedited inter-agency environmental and historic preservation review process and survey other agencies' categorical exclusions. It then requires the Administrator to issue regulations to implement any recommendations, including categorical exclusions, identified in the report and survey.

Section 302. Closeout incentives

This section allows the Administrator to develop incentives that would encourage state, local, and tribal governments to closeout expenditures and activities on a timely basis related to disaster or emergency assistance.

Section 303. Performance of services

This section allows the Administrator to appoint temporary FEMA employees, after serving continuously for 1 year, to positions in the agency in the same manner as competitive service employees.

Section 304. Study to streamline and consolidate information

This section directs the Administrator, along with other appropriate agencies to conduct a study and develop innovative means to simplify the collection of applicant and grantee information and the sharing of such information among disaster assistance agencies.

Section 305. Agency accountability

This section directs FEMA to provide regular reports on their website regarding disaster spending, disaster contracts, and other related disaster activities.

Section 306. Audit of contracts

This section prohibits FEMA from reimbursing any contract that prohibits oversight or auditing.

