



THE FEMA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017



HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE



The FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017, once signed into law, will signify the first Congressional reauthorization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – the agency responsible for coordinating the federal government’s critical role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Critical to ensuring America is better prepared to address 21st century disaster preparedness and response challenges, the bill provides essential direction in identifying and reducing the growing federal costs of disasters and supports the Nation’s emergency response personnel.

Background Information

Historically fragmented federal emergency and disaster activities resulted in the creation of FEMA through Executive Order 12127 issued by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. This action merged many separate disaster-related responsibilities into a single agency, however, the agency was never officially authorized in statute by Congress.

In March 2003, in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, FEMA joined 22 other federal agencies, programs, and offices in becoming the Department of Homeland Security.

The devastating impacts of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 revealed major problems with federal disaster preparedness, response, and relief efforts. In response, Congress established

the “Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina,” which offered recommendations for improving coordination and addressing the issues brought to light by Katrina.

On October 4, 2006, President George W. Bush signed into law the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. The act significantly reorganized FEMA, providing it substantial new authority to remedy gaps identified by the Select Committee that became apparent during the response to Hurricane Katrina. These included ensuring FEMA has the clear authority and capability to direct and coordinate a federal disaster response as well as a more robust preparedness mission. This important legislation also provided the first statutory authorization of FEMA by Congress in the agency’s history, providing for stronger Congressional oversight and increased accountability.



The FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017

The bipartisan FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017 provides the first ever reauthorization of the agency to ensure accountability and strong Congressional oversight. The legislation also establishes a comprehensive study to assess and make recommendations to reduce disaster costs and losses, better prepares America to address 21st century challenges to disaster preparedness and response, improves our Nation's emergency management capabilities, strengthens critical components of our preparedness and response system, and supports emergency response personnel.

Strengthening Accountability and Congressional Oversight

FEMA was created through an Executive Order issued by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. On October 4, 2006, President George W. Bush signed into law the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act which provided the first statutory authorization of FEMA by Congress in the agency's history. The FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017 continues these efforts, providing the first ever reauthorization of the agency to ensure accountability and strong Congressional oversight.

Specifically, the legislation:

- Reauthorizes FEMA through Fiscal Year 2020 consistent with current funding levels.

Studying Disaster Losses and Identifying Recommendations to Reduce Disaster Losses and Costs

Disaster costs and losses continue to increase and the Nation needs a complete assessment of these losses, what is driving these losses, what federal disaster assistance is available to individuals and the public and private sectors, the appropriate roles of each of those parties, and what public policy changes would result in fewer disaster losses and thus lower disaster-related costs.

Specifically, the legislation:

- Establishes a comprehensive study under the National Advisory Council.

Supporting Emergency Response Personnel

The Center for Domestic Preparedness provides specialized, all-hazards preparedness training in support of the National Training and Education System to state, local, and Tribal emergency responders on skills tied to national preparedness priorities, particularly those related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. To date, the Center for Domestic Preparedness has trained more than 895,690 students from state, local, and Tribal agencies. Training is designed to build the Nation's capacity to respond to and recover from disasters in a quick and robust fashion, therefore, strengthening the nation's preparedness and resilience in support of emergency and disaster declarations, response operations, exercises, and

National Special Security Events.

The National Domestic Preparedness Consortium provides first responders with a comprehensive all-hazards training program that includes a focus on weapons of mass destruction and natural disasters aimed to improve their capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from all hazards.

Specifically, the legislation:

- Reauthorizes the Center for Domestic Preparedness through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with current funding levels.
- Reauthorizes the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with current funding levels.

Clarifying FEMA's Responsibilities for Earthquake and Tsunami Events

Currently, FEMA is responsible for translating research and lessons learned from earthquakes and related events into guidance, training, support for states, and other activities. FEMA works with national model codes and standards groups; promotes better building code practices; assists states in developing mitigation, preparedness, and response plans; aids in the development of multistate groups; and supports comprehensive earthquake and related hazard education and awareness. FEMA applies earthquake hazards reduction measures, where applicable, to other natural and manmade hazards; provides preparedness, response, and mitigation recommendations to communities; and establishes demonstration projects on earthquake hazard mitigation to link earthquake research and mitigation with emergency management programs.

Specifically, the legislation:

- States that the FEMA Administrator is responsible for the Nation's efforts to reduce the loss of life and property from an earthquake, tsunami or combined event.



The FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017

Section-by-Section

Section 1. Short Title.

Section 1 designates the short title as the “FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2017.”

Section 2. Reauthorization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

This section reauthorizes FEMA through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with current funding levels. For Fiscal Year 2018, \$1.05 billion; for Fiscal Year 2019, \$1.07 billion; for Fiscal Year 2020 \$1.08 billion.

Section 3. Comprehensive Study of Disaster Costs and Losses.

This section directs the National Advisory Council to undertake a comprehensive study of the trends related to disaster assistance, costs and losses and provide recommendations to reduce the costs related to these events.

Section 4. National Domestic Preparedness Consortium.

This section reauthorizes the Center for Domestic Preparedness through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with current funding levels. For Fiscal Year 2018, \$63.9 million; for Fiscal Year 2019, \$65 million; for Fiscal Year 2020, \$66 million. This section also reauthorizes the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with current funding levels. For Fiscal Year 2018, \$101 million; for Fiscal Year 2019, \$102.6 million; for Fiscal Year 2020, \$104.2 million.

Section 5. National Preparation and Response Efforts Relating to Earthquakes and Tsunamis.

This section states that the Administrator is responsible for the Nation’s efforts to reduce the loss of life and property from an earthquake, tsunami or combined event.

Section 6. Authorities.

This section clarifies what constitutes a federal action for purposes of consultation.

Section 7. Technical Amendments to National Emergency Management.

This section makes technical changes to the national emergency management provisions of the law by making needed updates and corrections to unintentional errors.