

★ ISSUE BRIEF

Help Communities Resist Natural Disasters

Cosponsor H.R. 1748, the Safe Building
Code Incentive Act of 2015.

AIA POSITION

AIA supports policies that foster a built environment that can adapt to natural conditions and better absorb and recover from adverse events. The AIA strongly supports the adoption and enforcement of up-to-date model building codes as a key strategy to make communities more resilient.

H.R. 1748, the Safe Building Code Incentive Act of 2015 would increase FEMA disaster assistance grant funding by 4 percent to states that adopt and enforce up-to-date model building codes. This additional funding incentivizes states to enact the latest codes, which protect life and property, increase the quality and value of buildings, and reduce disaster recovery costs.

BACKGROUND

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012 served as wake-up calls about the nation's vulnerability to disaster. Across the nation, federal disaster declarations due to hurricanes, tornados, wildfires, and floods are becoming more frequent and more expensive, contributing to exploding disaster recovery costs to the taxpayer. The federal role in disaster response and recovery gives the federal government an interest in managing disaster risk through better buildings.

Through building codes, the technology and knowledge already exists to save lives and prevent disaster damage. For example, a study by the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center estimated that stronger building codes would have reduced wind damage from Hurricane Katrina by 80 percent, preventing \$8 billion in damage. In a study commissioned by FEMA, the National Institute of Building Sciences' Multihazard Mitigation Council reported that every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation activities yields four dollars in benefits.

Building codes are developed through an open process, using expert input to ensure human health, safety, and welfare in the construction and occupancy of buildings. These codes function as a minimum standard, offering an invaluable first line of defense against natural disasters and other adverse events. Encouraging the adoption of better building codes will save lives, property, and money.