

Issue Brief

AIA Government Relations Issue Position and Analysis

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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.

Help Communities Prepare for Natural Disasters

The National Mitigation Investment Act, first introduced during the 114th Congress, would create a national strategy for pre-disaster mitigation through stronger building codes. This legislation has three major components: a federal incentive to encourage states to build more resiliently ahead of disasters; a grant program to provide states and localities the opportunity to defray the cost of implementing and enforcing strong building codes; and a comprehensive study on disaster losses and trends. Stronger codes are a vital strategy to protect life and property, increase building quality and value, and reduce disaster recovery time and costs for taxpayers, insurers, and building owners.

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.

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 and enforcement of better codes will make buildings more resilient, saving lives, property, and money. Through codes, the technology and knowledge already exists to save lives and prevent much 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. Stronger building codes, more effective enforcement, and a better understanding of disaster trends are crucial to building more resilient communities.

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