

Issue brief

The problem

The impact of increasingly frequent natural disasters continues to result in the loss of lives, property, and even community. Such stressors place affected communities at higher risk for emotional and physical health problems. Many communities are at risk of natural disasters, yet are not built to a sufficiently strong code/standard to be resilient enough to withstand the threats of the future.

The ask

Support the Resilient AMERICA Act, which would increase allocations to FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) Program and make key improvements to the federal government's ability to prepare communities to be more resilient. This bipartisan bill will help mitigate the effects of future natural disasters.

For more information

Blake Nanney
(618) 615-3457
blakenanney@aia.org

The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292

Resilient AMERICA Act

ANALYSIS

Data analyzed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) shows that both the frequency and cost of natural disasters are increasing throughout the United States.¹ There was an average of almost eight (7.7) weather/climate disaster events that exceeded \$1 billion in recovery costs for the U.S. between 1980 - 2021. However, within the 5 years between 2017 – 2021, that average more than doubled, resulting in almost eighteen (17.8) events costing \$1 billion (or more) adjusted to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Tragically, American deaths reflect the arc of these trends as well, with average deaths caused by weather/climate disasters steadily increasing each decade since 1980.

Many communities remain vulnerable to future natural disaster risks, providing ever-increasing risks to life and property for families and business owners alike. These trends also increase the burden on federal taxpayers, as the recovery after each disaster requires costly federal disaster supplemental appropriations. More must be done proactively to improve community resilience nationwide *before* the next major natural disaster occurs.

THE SOLUTION

AIA urges Congress to authorize the Resilient Assistance for Mitigation for Environmentally Resilient Infrastructure and Construction by Americans (AMERICA) Act (Resilient AMERICA Act) to improve and equip community efforts to prepare for these challenges. This bipartisan bill would increase allocations to one of the federal government's most effective pre-disaster mitigation programs (FEMA's BRIC Program). It would expand the eligible uses of federal assistance to cover additional natural hazards, like wildfires, tsunamis, and ice storms. By providing specific set-aside pre-disaster mitigation funds to assist communities in adopting and enforcing the latest editions of resilient building codes, communities will make great strides toward preparedness.

Additionally, the Resilient AMERICA Act would expand the BRIC Program, making private non-profits eligible for grant funding and establishing a new residential resilience retrofit grant program. Taken together, these reforms shift federal funding toward mitigation ahead of the storms, instead of just waiting to disburse funds after disasters strike. Through these improvements, communities from coast to coast will be able to rest easier knowing their families' lives and personal property are ready to withstand the natural disasters they know will eventually come.

CITATIONS

¹ <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2021-us-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters-historical>

