



ECOS

Resolution 25-1
Approved March 26, 2025
Arlington, Virginia

As certified by
Ben Grumbles
Executive Director

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

WHEREAS, between 2011 and 2023, there were more than 800 federally declared U.S. major disasters for extreme weather events such as storms and flooding, wildfires, straight-line winds, tropical storms and cyclones, hurricanes, landslides, mudslides, tornadoes, and other disasters affecting 91% of congressional districts; and

WHEREAS, state, territorial, and the District of Columbia (hereinafter referred to as “state”) environmental agencies are often an integral part of a state's emergency response team to assist with initial disaster evaluation, response, and recovery; and

WHEREAS, many communities do not have capital available within their annual budgets to repair critical services, such as drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, when disasters strike; and

WHEREAS, a critical component of disaster response and early recovery is ensuring that states have immediate access to emergency relief funds to provide capacity and financial assistance when disasters strike; and

WHEREAS, federal disaster assistance is vital to states’ ability to ensure that immediate financial challenges following a disaster do not prevent rural communities from implementing more durable solutions when replacing damaged infrastructure following natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) generally funds in-kind replacement of structures using pre-disaster designs, potentially perpetuating known vulnerabilities and reflecting outdated construction practices; and

WHEREAS, state response efforts may identify impacted community infrastructure for FEMA to consider when providing recovery funding; and

WHEREAS, the federal government continues to develop a variety of possible approaches to modernizing the nation’s infrastructure, creating opportunities to improve readiness for extreme weather events, protect businesses and residential properties, and reduce financial impacts of disasters; and

WHEREAS, FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments following a presidentially declared disaster to support efforts to recover and rebuild at the community level in a manner that reduces or mitigates future disaster losses; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and FEMA signed a September 11, 2024 Memorandum of Understanding, “Regarding Coordination Between EPA and FEMA Pertaining to State Revolving Fund Programs,” noting that early access to information on damaged facilities would allow State Revolving Funds (SRFs) to initiate early contact with communities to supplement or “bridge” forthcoming FEMA funding. The memo further notes that SRFs can provide documentation to FEMA for facility, engineering, and environmental review; and

WHEREAS, when there are imminent threats to communities, states rely on EPA to provide staff, technology, supplemental funding, and federal interagency coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL OF THE STATES (ECOS):

Supports increased federal funding to be deployed by states in responding in the immediate aftermath of a disaster prior to the delivery of longer-term funding and financing;

Encourages EPA, FEMA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, other federal agencies, and states to fund the work needed to plan for extreme weather events, to enhance community readiness, and to leverage state information following a major disaster to inform FEMA funding decisions and provide greater certainty to communities on funding reimbursement;

Believes the federal government should provide immediate financial support to states following a federal disaster declaration, proportional to the scope and scale of the disaster, for use in early recovery activities, and allow relief funds to be used to help communities rebuild to modern standards and implement more durable and resilient solutions; and

Calls for continued evaluation of ways that EPA, FEMA, other federal agencies, and states can work together to advance the bipartisan Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief & Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), which constitutes the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA.