

# FEMA REFLECTS ON HISTORIC YEAR

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**Release Date: December 29, 2017**

As 2017 comes to a close, FEMA is reflecting on a historic year, including unprecedented disasters that affected more than 25 million Americans (almost 8 percent of the U.S. population).

For those who experienced significant losses from flooding, hurricanes, or wildfires, these disasters were immediate and personal. For others, this was the year they supported disaster survivors, by donating funds, packing and sending relief supplies, or volunteering their time to help those in need.

This year, FEMA supported 59 major disaster declarations, 16 emergency declarations and 62 Fire Management Assistance Grant declarations, across more than 35 states, tribes and territories. Thousands of FEMA staff continue to work closely with state, local, tribal and territorial officials in joint field offices and state emergency management offices across country.

The catastrophic events of 2017 serve as a reminder that response, recovery, preparedness and mitigation take the whole community. FEMA will work with our many partners across all levels of government, non-profit agencies and the private sector, to continue to assist disaster survivors throughout their recovery, and to instill a true culture of preparedness across the nation.

## **New leadership**

After a Senate confirmation vote of 95-4, Brock Long was officially sworn in as FEMA administrator on June 23, 2017. Administrator Long brings to FEMA nearly two decades of emergency management experience, from both the public and private sectors.

## **Catastrophic hurricanes and wildfires**



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The 2017 hurricane season produced 17 named storms, 10 of which became hurricanes (six of those major hurricanes) -- including the first two major hurricanes (Harvey and Irma) to hit the continental U.S. in 12 years.

In response to the hurricanes, 48 states and the District of Columbia assisted with response and recovery operations, in Texas, Florida and the U.S. territories in the Caribbean, through Emergency Management Assistance Compacts.

FEMA and its federal partners, provided 138 million meals, 194 million liters of water, 10.2 million gallons of fuel and installed 1,310 generators to power critical facilities supporting survivors impacted by the four major hurricanes. Countless additional commodities and comfort were also provided through non-profit organizations, private companies, neighbors and volunteers, from across the country.

This year was also historic for wildfires across the western United States, and included two of the most devastating to ever impact California; the Tubbs fire in the northern counties, and the Thomas fire, which gained the distinction of becoming the largest wildfire in modern California history.

### **Billions in disaster assistance**

FEMA obligated more than \$7.2 billion in disaster assistance, (Individual Assistance and Public Assistance) in 2017.

Nearly five million survivor households have registered for the Individual Assistance program, which provides direct support to individuals and households in impacted areas. This year, FEMA received more registrations than for Hurricanes Rita, Wilma, Katrina and Sandy combined.

FEMA obligated billions of dollars to repair infrastructure through the Public Assistance program, so that state, local, tribal and territorial governments were reimbursed for clearing debris and rebuilding roads, schools, libraries, and other public infrastructure.

### **Historic staffing levels**

Thousands of civilian employees and military service members, from more than 30 agencies and departments across the federal government were deployed, for the



singular purpose of helping others.

FEMA activated the National Response Coordination Center in Washington, D.C., and brought together national and international response support for a record 76 consecutive days.

To support the great demand for disaster assistance, FEMA increased call center staffing tenfold, as compared to steady state operations, and increased the overall number of housing inspectors fourfold.

All 28 of our National Urban Search and Rescue task forces rapidly deployed to assist state, local, tribal and territorial governments in response to the disasters, searching over 30,900 structures and saving or assisting over 8,800 people.

### **Emergency alerts and warnings**

Throughout this busy year, FEMA and the National Weather Service, provided support for state and local authorities as they issued multiple Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) informing the public of incoming hazards. The Florida Division of Emergency Management issued several alerts that enabled an estimated 6.5 million residents to evacuate in advance of Hurricane Irma.

### **National Flood Insurance Program**

The historic disasters of 2017 created one of the busiest years for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to date -- the NFIP has paid out over \$8 billion dollars in flood insurance claims, thus far.

This hurricane season, the NFIP enhanced the flood insurance claims process for policyholders impacted by these hurricanes. Private insurance partners were directed to provide advance payments of up to \$20,000 on flood claims, even before visits by an adjuster; and to waive the initial Proof of Loss requirement in many cases.

In an effort to make the NFIP more resilient, in 2017, FEMA entered, for the first time, into a reinsurance agreement with 25 reinsurance companies representing some of the largest insurance and reinsurance groups around the globe, transferring over \$1 billion of the program's risk to the private sector. This move allowed the program to recover \$1.042 billion to pay NFIP claims when the losses



of Hurricane Harvey exceeded \$8 billion.

## **Support for State, Local and Tribal Governments**

FEMA's post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs awarded 941 grants to 54 states, territories, tribes and districts totaling \$627 million. These grants supported disaster recovery and resilience projects in property acquisition, elevation, flood control, safe room construction, and infrastructure protection to reduce the impacts of future disasters.

FEMA awarded over \$2.3 billion in non-disaster grant awards, in funds used by state, local, tribal and territorial governments including fire departments and law enforcement agencies, along with ports, transit agencies and non-profit organizations. Grant awards were used to build and sustain the core capabilities needed to meet the National Preparedness Goal to prepare for the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the security of the nation.

FEMA's National Training and Education Division partners delivered 3,713 courses and trained 140,785 first responders and public officials.

The Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) graduated its one-millionth student in 2017. During the year, CDP completed 2,221 classes, training 51,600 first responders and public officials.

Also this year, FEMA launched the Tribal Declarations Pilot Guidance, which resulted from the amendments to the Stafford Act under the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act. Four tribes directly received major disaster declarations under the new pilot guidance, including the Hoopa Valley Tribe, the Resighini Rancheria, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Pueblo of Acoma.

## **Empowering the Public**

When disaster strikes, it is often individual citizens who are the first true responders on the ground helping neighbors, colleagues or friends, even before local first responders or the government are on scene.

In 2017, FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Medical Reserve Corps and Uniformed Services University's National Center for Disaster Medical



and Public Health launched [“You Are the Help Until Help Arrives”](#) program to provide tools to educate and empower the public to act in an emergency situation before professional help arrives. The program encourages members of the public to take key actions to include calling 9-1-1, protect the injured from harm, stop the bleeding, position the injured so they can breathe, and provide comfort.

This year was historic on many levels, but millions of Americans will continue their recovery well into the next year. Today, thousands of FEMA and federal staff remain deployed, and the agency remains committed to continuing to support survivors throughout their recovery.

All segments of society, from individuals to governments to the private sector, have an important role to play to build resilience and a true culture of preparedness across the nation. As FEMA works with our partners, and we prepare for challenges ahead in the New Year, we advise all Americans to take the time to prepare for their own potential risks and unforeseen emergencies. Now is the time to make resolutions ahead for the coming year; visit [Ready.gov](#) for advice on how to prepare your family, home or business in 2018.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards.

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The social media links provided are for reference only. FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.

For the latest information about FEMA continuing support to response and recovery efforts, see:



Hurricane Harvey: <https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-harvey>  
Hurricane Irma: <https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-irma>  
Hurricane Maria: <https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-maria>



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