

FEMA Releases First-ever Response and Recovery Review, Highlights Accomplishments Amid Unique Disasters

Release Date: January 31, 2024

WASHINGTON – Today, FEMA published its first [Office of Response and Recovery Year in Review](#) report, highlighting the office’s 2023 accomplishments, challenges and innovative solutions as it continues to face increasingly unique disasters. From a typhoon in Guam, to the devastating fire on Maui, to the historic flooding in Vermont, in 2023 FEMA supported responses to more than 100 new disasters, including 84 presidentially declared events, providing more than \$1.3 billion in direct assistance to survivors. These incidents spanned the continental United States, Caribbean, Western Pacific, and Alaska. The report highlights how the agency supported these disasters and the solutions that helped communities recover faster.

As part of the new operational tempo driven by the changing climate, the number of staff deployed to support survivors has more than doubled since 2016, with FEMA deploying an average of 7,113 responders annually since 2017. In 2023, FEMA staff collectively spent more than 1.3 million days responding to disasters and their commitment to the mission was instrumental in distributing life-sustaining support and commodities to help survivors and communities recover.

“As an agency and as a nation we faced numerous devastating disasters in 2023. In light of the destruction, the FEMA workforce found opportunities for collaboration and areas for ingenuity to better support survivors and their communities,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “This year in review is a glimpse into the important work conducted in 2023 to help people during some of their hardest moments. We will take these experiences and lessons with us to help more people, more effectively in 2024.”

In 2023, FEMA implemented new approaches to put people first and remove barriers for disaster assistance. During 20 recovery missions, FEMA’s Recovery Directorate utilized a process that identifies and assists applicants who need



proactive support navigating the agency's recovery programs. This initiative led to over \$60 million in additional funds for survivors. Other enhancements to improve the survivor experience in 2023 included simplified letters to survivors who apply for assistance and the formation of the first Pre-Disaster Housing initiative, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which helped provide reliable, affordable and safe housing for disaster survivors.

"The Office of Response and Recovery has done truly remarkable work over this past year," said Associate Administrator for the Office of Response and Recovery Anne Bink. "We continue to lean forward proactively, and we strive to integrate response and recovery immediately following an incident. To ensure expedited recovery for survivors, we pre-deployed our Disaster Survivor Assistance teams to Florida, and registered survivors for assistance within four hours of President Biden's Major Disaster Declaration after Hurricane Idalia. In 2024, we will continue to work to ensure that FEMA is ready to meet the mission, no matter when, where, or how disaster strikes."

Throughout the year FEMA was able to respond effectively and help survivors jumpstart their recovery. For example, during the historic Hawaii wildfire response in August 2023, search and rescue resources on the ground searched more than 2,000 structures. In this ongoing recovery effort, the agency continues to focus on delivering technical assistance and coordinating recovery efforts across the federal family. Through its Interagency Recovery Coordination mission, FEMA is working with trusted local community leaders on the ground and faith-based organizations who understand the unique history and culture of Maui.

Likewise, for the Mississippi spring tornadoes, FEMA staff were onsite within hours and coordinating closely with the state emergency management agency. Just over two weeks after the major disaster declaration, more than \$7.7 million in federal assistance was approved to support survivors. Roughly six months later, FEMA staff had met with 936 faith-based groups and 108 community-based organizations to ensure survivors had the support they needed and visited about 14,000 homes to verify damage and help with applications for assistance.

The report details how FEMA is focused on helping survivors by prioritizing building a ready workforce, utilizing technology to streamline processes, delivering critical commodities, and enhancing programs to ensure communities are building back more resilient than before a disaster.

