

<b>Question#:</b>	1
<b>Topic:</b>	Equity
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** How is equity being incorporated into the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) next strategic plan? To what extent is FEMA collecting and incorporating feedback firsthand from individuals who have faced adversity?

**Response:** The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is committed to ensuring that our programs deliver equitable outcomes to all communities before, during and after disasters. Historically underserved communities often suffer disproportionately from disasters and delays in resuming social and economic life after a major disaster, exacerbating pre-existing inequities. It is imperative that resources are directed to these communities and the agency routinely evaluates its programs and policies to eliminate disparities in these outcomes.

To this end, the first goal of the 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan is to Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management. ([2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan, December 2021](#)) FEMA will integrate equity as a foundation of the emergency management culture through transformational change within our workforce, across our programs, and throughout the emergency management community.

To address equity within our workforce, FEMA will be examining how we recruit, promote, and retain diverse talent across the agency. FEMA is committed to ensuring that its employees increasingly reflect the diversity of the nation and will be expanding current practices such as partnering with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium of Tribal Colleges and Universities to create hiring pipelines into the field of emergency management. FEMA will also invest in diversity and inclusion efforts to increase employees' involvement and participation in cultivating a culture of inclusion.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identified FEMA as a High Impact Service Provider under the President's Management Agenda. Under this designation, FEMA implements several customer experience techniques, such as surveys, focus groups, and journey mapping, to receive feedback continually from survivors about their experience. FEMA uses this information to adjust and refine program design, policy, process, and delivery. Additionally, FEMA will be building program capacity and capability to conduct ongoing equity-based evaluations across its programs.

<b>Question#:</b>	2
<b>Topic:</b>	Justice40 Implementation Plan
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** When does FEMA anticipate finalizing its Justice40 implementation plan? How will FEMA determine whether the Justice40 pilot is successful? What would success look like, and how will engagement with impacted disadvantaged communities inform your assessment? Has FEMA required assistance to calculate benefits? Will the calculation of benefits to disadvantaged communities served by the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities programs include investments outside of that community?

**Response:** Two of FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs – Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities – BRIC – and the Flood Mitigation Assistance – FMA – grant programs were chosen as two of 21 pilot Justice40 programs across the federal government. In addition to BRIC and FMA, FEMA’s Risk MAP program was recently deemed a covered program. All three programs undertook an initial implementation of the Justice40 Interim Guidance to maximize the benefits that are directed to disadvantaged communities. The Justice40 Initiative’s overall goal is for all covered programs (investments in climate resilience and clean energy) to direct at least 40 percent of benefits to disadvantaged communities. FEMA has been regularly engaged in the development of the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) which uses FEMA’s National Risk Index, among other indicators, to identify disadvantaged or underserved communities. CEJST was released as a beta version for public comment on February 18, 2022, and FEMA will continue to implement and evaluate this screening tool to measure progress against the Administration’s goal. In order to reach more disadvantaged communities, FEMA is working to refine its outreach and engagement strategies. FEMA recognizes that there is not one way to reach all underserved communities, as each community is unique, and FEMA will need to explore a variety of targeted communication mediums to reach these various communities. Through deliberate and iterative outreach efforts, FEMA will be able to learn more about how to increase the capability and capacity of disadvantaged SLTTs and refine its programs to better serve these populations and work towards meeting the Justice40 goal. FEMA has not required assistance to calculate benefits and is working with other Justice40 Pilot Programs to refine draft methodologies. FEMA primarily calculates benefits inside communities, based on the data provided by communities in project subapplications; following the guidance in M-21-28, FEMA includes both direct and indirect benefits that positively impact disadvantaged communities, and is working to accurately measure indirect benefits without increasing the reporting burden on applicants.

<b>Question#:</b>	3
<b>Topic:</b>	Public Feedback
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** FEMA has asked for public feedback on changing agency policies that perpetuate systemic barriers for people of color and underserved groups. Please describe the extent of public engagement FEMA has received on this issue. To what extent does FEMA plan to incorporate the feedback it has received?

**Response:** On April 22, 2021, FEMA published a Request for Information (RFI) that sought public comment on whether FEMA appropriately advances the administration goals of equity and bolstering resilience to climate change. The deadline for comments was July 21, 2021. FEMA also hosted a meeting on June 15 for the public to provide such comments orally and another meeting on June 16 for issues specific to tribal governments. Specifically, the RFI sought input on “specific FEMA programs, regulations, collections of information, and policies for the agency to consider modifying, streamlining, expanding, or repealing in light of recent Executive Orders” and to “ensure that its programs, regulations and policies contain necessary, properly tailored, and up-to-date requirements that effectively achieve FEMA’s mission in a manner that furthers the goals of advancing equity for all, including those in underserved communities, and bolstering resilience from the impacts of climate change.”, FEMA received over 300 comments and is leveraging the comments received to help inform a range of policy, process, and regulatory actions. Equal Rights hosted several community roundtable events to receive feedback and questions from stakeholders. Multiple FEMA offices participated – Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, Chief Procurement Office – providing resources and answering questions directly. On November 17, 2021 FEMA OER also coordinated and hosted Civil Rights 2.0 – Equity, a civil rights summit to engage FEMA and its stakeholders in collaborative dialogue aimed at identifying actual and perceived biases impacting equal access to FEMA’s programs and services. Civil Rights 2.0 - Equity was a follow up to the first civil rights summit FEMA held in 2020. The summit’s goal was to continue the conversation about equity, equal access, and implementation with public members with first-hand knowledge about how FEMA can better meet the needs of underserved and historically marginalized communities before, during, and after disasters. FEMA will consider information and feedback it received during the summit as it advances equities in its policies.

<b>Question#:</b>	4
<b>Topic:</b>	Extreme Weather Events
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** How will FEMA and its ability to respond to extreme weather events be impacted if action is not taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

**Response:** FEMA recognizes that climate change is the crisis of our generation; combating it will require mitigating future risks and reducing impacts. Communities across the country continue to witness the devastating and increasing impacts of hurricanes, floods, wildfires, droughts, and other weather events. The increase and severity of disasters increases the burdens on our staff and emergency management partners and disproportionately impacts historically overburdened and underserved communities.

According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s data, in 2020 alone, there were twenty-two (22) “billion dollar” disasters. This shattered the previous annual record of 16 such disasters and is simply unsustainable when we consider future risks resulting from climate change. This is concerning and reinforces our commitment to addressing the climate crisis and ensuring FEMA and the nation’s readiness for major disasters.

Per our partners at the Environmental Protection Agency, the current greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere have taken centuries to accumulate (over 400ppm CO<sub>2</sub> in 2019 compared to ~200-300ppm CO<sub>2</sub> in pre-industrial times). In the best-case scenario, it will take decades more to mitigate the accumulated GHG increase sufficiently to reduce extreme weather incidence stemming from climate change and that is only if significant reductions are made by stakeholders the world over.

On that basis, FEMA will be responding to extreme weather events for decades to come (likely even increasing in intensity for many years, even after GHG reductions begin) because of the lag time expected for the effect of such reductions to yield fewer or lesser extreme weather events.

<sup>1</sup> [www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-atmospheric-concentrations-greenhouse-gases](http://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-atmospheric-concentrations-greenhouse-gases)

<sup>1</sup> [Global Warming of 1.5 °C — \(ipcc.ch\)](https://www.ipcc.ch/)

<b>Question#:</b>	5
<b>Topic:</b>	CO2 Emissions
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** In the Build Back Better Act, roughly \$3 billion would be allocated for the General Services Administration to purchase tens of thousands of electric vehicles. This investment will cut hundreds of thousands of metric tons of CO2 emissions annually. How important is it for the federal government to take steps like this across the government, and lead by example, to reduce its carbon pollution?

**Response:** Executive Order 14008, §102(f) states: “*The United States will also immediately begin...promoting the flow of capital toward climate-aligned investments and away from high-carbon investments.*” In addition, section 205 requires the General Services Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Council on Environmental Quality to develop a Federal Clean Electricity and Vehicle Procurement Strategy. Subject to unique agency mission requirements, fleet electrification across federal agencies aligns with intent and direction of the “*Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*” Executive Order. FEMA is working with the Department to accelerate transition of administrative vehicles to electric and review the feasibility of electrification for our mission-critical vehicles.

<b>Question#:</b>	6
<b>Topic:</b>	50 Percent by 2030
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** President Biden has set the goal of reducing the amount of carbon that goes into our atmosphere by 50% by 2030. What efforts is FEMA undertaking to reduce the carbon footprint of its operations?

**Response:** FEMA is committed to supporting the President’s GHG reduction goals. Implementation methods and performance measures in this area are defined in the DHS Climate Action Plan (Sept 2021), DHS Priority Action #2: Ensure Climate Resilient Facilities and Infrastructure, as follows:

[DHS will] Evaluate the federal methodology guidance to be issued in January 2022 from the Office of Management and Budget to account for the social benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions via quantifying the social cost of carbon, nitrous oxide, and methane and provide recommendations for use by DHS Components.

**Performance:** Report annually on progress toward measuring and reducing DHS greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability practices in the Sustainability Report and Implementation Plan.

All relevant GHG reduction opportunities, to include investing more effort in federal agency high performance sustainable building compliance and maximizing energy intensity reduction efforts, are also captured in the FEMA Operational Sustainability Performance Plan. This plan contains the strategies for integrating the sustainable practices within operations leading to Scope 1 and 2 GHG reduction results. Examples of sustainable practices in place and in development include achieving high performance sustainable building performance for more than 588,965 sq. ft. of agency facilities, implementation of various energy and water efficiency investments and energy conservation measures, reductions in landfill waste and management of recycling programs at 100 percent of the agency’s facilities. These sustainable actions led FEMA to an annual GHG reduction of more than 30,500 Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent emissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, as compared to the established 2008 baseline. FEMA plans to generate even more climate adaptation and resilience awareness and training opportunities for the agency’s emergency responders and operations staff in order to further maximize GHG emissions reductions.

<b>Question#:</b>	7
<b>Topic:</b>	Following Hurricane Ida
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Following Hurricane Ida, how many applications for disaster assistance have been received by Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania? How many have been approved? What are the most common reasons for denials?

**Response:** Mississippi is not included since the data represented is as of the hearing date, October 5, 2021, and a major disaster was not declared for Mississippi at that time.

The top five reasons why applicants were deemed ineligible for disaster assistance are provided in the table below, along with the number of applicant registrations, number of applicants referred to assistance, and the number of applicants approved for assistance.

FEMA’s Individuals and Households Program (IHP) provides financial assistance and direct services to eligible individuals and households who have uninsured or underinsured necessary expenses and serious needs. Funds are provided for disaster-caused needs such as home repair, damaged personal property, and rental assistance.

“Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience” data as of October 5, 2021.

Event	State	Disaster	Valid Registrations	Referred to Individuals and Households Program (IHP)	Approved for Individuals and Households Program (IHP) \$
Ida	LA	4611	784,827	559,877	510,473
Ida	NJ	4614	63,146	28,257	18,622
Ida	NY	4615	63,960	28,082	16,671
Ida	PA	4618	20,102	6,856	2,691
		Total:	932,035	623,072	548,457

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<b>Count Ineligible</b>	<b>Ineligible Reason</b>
88,457	Applicant stated they have insurance that may cover disaster damage. FEMA will review for potential assistance after the applicant submits insurance settlement or denial letter
17,608	Applicant requested to be withdrawn from the FEMA program
10,351	Applicant could not be reached by FEMA to complete an inspection
9,621	Home is safe to occupy after the disaster
4,731	Home is safe to occupy after the disaster and/or linked with another application for the same address. This will need a person to review and process further.



<b>Question#:</b>	8
<b>Topic:</b>	Blue Roof Program
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** How many individuals have registered for the Blue Roof program in Louisiana, and how many installations have been completed? How does this compare to prior disasters?

**Response:** Operation Blue Roof is a priority mission managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The purpose of Operation Blue Roof is to provide homeowners and permanently occupied rental properties in disaster areas with fiber-reinforced sheeting to cover their damaged roofs until arrangements can be made for permanent repairs. This is a free service to homeowners. Operation Blue Roof protects property, reduces temporary housing costs, and allows residents to remain in their homes while recovering from the storm.

As a result of Hurricane Ida's impacts, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) received a total of 72,299 requests for Operation Blue Roof. The program deadline was Oct. 15, 2021. In total, the USACE installed over 33,600 blue roofs for Hurricane Ida. However, it should be noted that the total number of requests includes those who were not eligible for the program. For example, this could include renters, homes outside the designated parishes or homes with more than 50 percent structural damage. In Hurricane Ida USACE reported more than 34,500 valid requests for blue roofs.<sup>1</sup> The USACE installed their final blue roof on November 1, 2021.

In comparing Hurricane Ida to Hurricane Laura in 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received 17,566 total requests for Operation Blue Roof. In total, USACE installed 13,027 blue roofs for this event.

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<sup>1</sup>The difference between the number of valid requests (i.e., 34,500+) and the number installed (i.e., 33,600+) occurred because of other roofing solutions (e.g., installations covered by insurance) that were completed before USACE blue roof could be installed.

<b>Question#:</b>	9
<b>Topic:</b>	Vulnerable Populations
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** According to the Louisiana Department of Health, nine senior citizens died as a result of "excessive heat during an extended power outage" following Hurricane Ida. What can be done in future disasters to check on senior citizens and other vulnerable populations to ensure they have what they need?

**Response:** Any loss of life during a disaster is a tragedy, and FEMA is committed to working closely with our Federal, state, local, tribal nation, territorial, and non-governmental partners to minimize the loss of life and property in all disasters including emergency funding to respond to and protect those most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters.

Disaster response is locally executed, state managed, and federally supported. State and local governments maintain primary responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their residents. FEMA and our Federal partners, including the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Energy support state and local partners via Direct Federal Assistance.

Senior citizens who rely on electricity-dependent equipment and devices are particularly vulnerable to the compounded impacts of prolonged power outages and excessive heat. Local, state, and Federal public health officials routinely prioritize support to these populations, both in long-term care facilities and those who live independently in their own homes. Strategies are in place via partnerships with utility companies and state/local/tribal nation/territorial emergency managers to prioritize power restoration efforts and manage cascading impacts due to power outage.

The COVID-19 response has strengthened the relationship between public health and emergency management at all levels of government. FEMA is confident that the existing coordination between public health and emergency management mechanisms are sufficient to help scale Federal support to state and local partners to minimize the loss to life and property following disasters. State and local public health partners should be contacted for further information regarding electricity-dependent populations or to the Department of Energy for grid resilience.

Vulnerable populations are a priority area of focus for FEMA. The Agency routinely conducts after-action reviews and updates plans and policies to apply, lessons learned, new datasets, and improved modeling to help ensure vulnerable populations are identified and protected from disaster threats and hazards. This is a critical area of concern to FEMA and the Agency will remain ever-vigilant in working with State, local, Territorial, Tribal Nation, and local (SLTT) governments using all means at our disposal including federal grants to build SLTT governments

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<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

response and recovery capabilities and reduce impacts of future disasters especially on those most vulnerable to the devastating effects of disasters.

<b>Question#:</b>	10
<b>Topic:</b>	Entergy
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** A New Orleans news station determined, based on regulatory data, that Entergy spent four times as much money on operating and acquiring power plants as it did on maintaining and improving the electric grid. Has Entergy cooperated with FEMA and other federal entities in the response efforts? What needs to be done to ensure that Entergy makes the necessary investments to harden the grid against future storms?

**Response:** The private sector owns and operates the majority of the Nation’s energy infrastructure, and the private sector owner and operator is the primary entity responsible for all power restoration requirements. The Federal Government does not provide support to investor-owned for-profit utilities under the Stafford Act. Specifically, FEMA does not have the authority nor the expertise to provide technical assistance or financial aid in the hardening of the electrical grid for for-profit electric providers.

FEMA coordinated with both the State and Entergy as the electrical grid was brought back on-line. In addition, the National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) is FEMA's virtual clearinghouse for information sharing between private industry partners and public agencies, before, during, and after disasters. Members share knowledge from the field impacting operating status and recovery challenges. The NBEOC also provides data to inform business continuity decisions and provides integration with disaster planning, training and exercises. Any multi-state private sector organization may volunteer to take part, including large businesses, chambers of commerce, trade associations, universities, think tanks and nonprofits. In an active disaster response, NBEOC members have unique lines of communication to FEMA's National Response Coordination Center, activated Regional Response Coordination Centers and the broader network of emergency management operations, including state and federal partners.

<b>Question#:</b>	11
<b>Topic:</b>	Global Supply Chain Issues
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** How are the broader global supply chain issues affecting the recovery efforts, in particular with regards to restoring and rebuilding the electrical grid in Louisiana and other rebuilding efforts in Louisiana, New York, and New Jersey?

**Response:** We did not see significant challenges in placement of utility crews and other industry responders in hotels while restoring the energy community lifeline functions. While a known deficit of drivers and inflationary pressures for containers and select building materials exists, there does not appear to be an unreasonable delay for supplies available and demand created by rebuilding homes and other infrastructure.

<b>Question#:</b>	12
<b>Topic:</b>	Workforce Challenges
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Does FEMA's workforce currently have the capacity to handle more extreme weather events?

**Response:** While the nation is facing disasters that are increasingly frequent, severe, and complex, FEMA's workforce continues to fulfill its mission of helping people before, during and after disasters. As of October 5, 2021, FEMA was supporting 69 Presidentially declared disasters with more than 8,600 responders deployed to support response and recovery efforts for Hurricane Ida, COVID-19, and other disasters. FEMA continues to prioritize hiring, onboarding, and training a diverse workforce that is ready to support the Agency and its mission. While the country has continued to see an increase in disaster activity since 2017, FEMA has hired 3,000 staff into the Incident Management (IM) workforce. As of October 5, 2021, FEMA had approximately 11,400 staff in its IM workforce.

FEMA has also worked to augment its disaster workforce by leveraging existing staff to meet the increased demand. In October 2020, FEMA stood up the Disaster Staffing Support Program (DSSP) to enhance FEMA's capability to fill critical disaster staffing shortfalls by utilizing Headquarters full time equivalent personnel (i.e., internal surge). Since then, the DSSP has filled over 220 staffing requests to support disaster operations, the vaccination mission, the southwest border, and Operation Allies Welcome.

Additionally, in February 2021, DHS activated the Surge Capacity Force (SCF), which is comprised of volunteers from across DHS components and other federal agencies, and has deployed over 250 SCF members to support the vaccination mission. FEMA also coordinated with partners at AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps and Peace Corps to deploy more than 370 personnel in non-clinical vaccination positions. FEMA will continue to work with other federal agencies and partners to provide staff to support current and emergent events.

**Question:** What workforce challenges, if any, is the agency facing with its ability to respond to new weather events?

**Response:** FEMA's workforce is critical to the Agency's readiness and its ability to successfully accomplish its disaster mission. As of October 5, FEMA's current national IM force strength was approximately 11,400, which represents a net increase of over 4,700 staff since 2016. This represents approximately 65 percent of total national force structure achieved towards FEMA's goal of 17,670 IM employees onboard by the end of FY 2024.

However, in FY 2021, workforce growth slowed. The 2017 hurricanes and wildfires began a new normal for FEMA's disaster workforce. Since the peak in 2017, the Agency has faced

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increasingly frequent, severe, and complex disasters, requiring more than twice as many staff deployed every day for the last four years compared to the year and a half preceding Hurricane Harvey’s landfall. Due to this unprecedented demand, FEMA was slower to grow its IM workforce than initially projected. Additionally, FEMA had to divert time and resources from the hiring of the IM workforce to support the hiring of local hires for the COVID-19 Vaccination Mission. Given these challenges, FEMA is currently working with DHS to re-evaluate the timeline to achieve its force structure.

**Question:** Has the coronavirus pandemic impacted the ability of FEMA’s workforce to respond to weather events? If so, how?

**Response:** FEMA’s priority will always be lifesaving and life sustaining missions. Our dedicated workforce of over 21,000 continues to support the nation in preparedness, recovery, and mitigation efforts and can turn to response in a moment’s notice to support any new incident. The COVID-19 pandemic has required an unprecedented whole-of-government response, and it impacted the way in which FEMA provided support to SLTT partners.

To protect the health and wellbeing of the incident workforce and the communities that we serve, FEMA implemented operational adaptations, starting in 2020, including updating policies, processes, and guidance; delivering programs and services virtually; and providing virtual training opportunities while continuing to deliver FEMA’s mission effectively and safely.

FEMA will continue to adapt our program delivery based on lessons learned and best practices from 2020 and 2021 to safely and effectively support our SLTT partners and meet the needs of disaster survivors. FEMA takes a data-driven, science-based approach to determine which adaptations the agency must apply and under what circumstances. Additional details regarding these adaptations can be found in the COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance released in May 2021 as guidance for SLTT partners.

<b>Question#:</b>	13
<b>Topic:</b>	Critical Needs Assistance Program
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Robin Kelly
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** How many Hurricane Ida survivors have taken advantage of the \$500 in critical needs assistance available to them?

What challenges have individuals encountered when applying for and receiving funds from the Critical Needs Assistance program?

Is FEMA making any changes to ensure that those funds get to eligible survivors as soon as possible, as was promised to them?

**Response:** “Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience” data as of hearing date, October 5, 2021.

Please note, Mississippi was not declared at the time of the hearing date.

Event	State	Disaster	Valid Registrations	Referred to Individuals and Households Program (IHP)	Approved for Individuals and Households Program (IHP) \$	Approved Critical Needs Assistance (CNA)
Ida	LA	4611	784,827	559,877	510,473	495,602
Ida	NJ	4614	63,146	28,257	18,622	0
Ida	NY	4615	63,960	28,082	16,671	0
Ida	PA	4618	20,102	6,856	2,691	0
		Total:	932,035	623,072	548,457	495,602

New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania requests that FEMA authorize Critical Needs Assistance (CNA) requests were not approved. The requests did not demonstrate they had met the criteria for authorizing CNA. Pursuant to FEMA Policy 104-009-03, *Individual Assistance Program and Policy Guide, Version 1.1 (IAPPG), Chapter 3, Section VI.B.6.*, CNA may be authorized for specific geographic areas (i.e., parishes or ZIP codes), identified by the state, territorial, or tribal government when:



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1. Applicants are displaced due to restrictions placed by the state, local, territorial, or tribal government officials (e.g., evacuation advisory, inaccessibility);
2. Shelters in the area do not meet the needs of the displaced population; and
3. Community and life-sustaining services within a reasonable distance from the area are limited due to the disaster-caused impact.

In Louisiana, where CNA was approved, the extended power outages and lack of accessibility to certain areas because of extended mandatory evacuations experienced during Hurricane Ida presented some challenges for awarding CNA. In some cases, these circumstances prevented applicants from knowing the damage status of their home. To address this, FEMA waived the requirement that applicants report damage that impacted the habitability of their home. FEMA also received feedback that some applicants were unsure of their immediate disaster needs when they applied. As a result, FEMA further expanded eligibility to include applicants who reported displacement from their home at registration or those that updated their current location to somewhere other than their home. This allowed greater flexibility for those applicants that may not have been aware of their disaster needs or were confused by the intent of the questions when they initially registered.

FEMA is constantly evaluating the disaster assistance application process and identifying ways to ensure that FEMA's questions are clear, easy to understand, and help survivors identify all of their disaster-related needs. FEMA is also conducting a comprehensive review of applicant correspondence to ensure our program eligibility requirements are explained clearly and applicants receive timely, understandable information on the next steps for obtaining additional assistance. Both of these initiatives are intended to remove unnecessary burdens some applicants may face in the disaster assistance process and further FEMA's goal of ensuring disaster assistance is provided in an equitable and accessible manner following disasters.

<b>Question#:</b>	14
<b>Topic:</b>	Modify Requirements
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Robin Kelly
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Why did FEMA change the rules on who qualifies for the Critical Needs Assistance funds midstream?

Why are there such strict requirements for the FEMA aid available after a disaster?

What has FEMA done to assess what flexibilities are available for FEMA to modify requirements for aid?

**Response:** FEMA expanded eligibility for CNA by waiving certain eligibility criteria in response to the unique circumstances of Hurricane Ida’s impact on Louisiana, including the extended power outages and lack of accessibility to certain areas due to extended mandatory evacuations. These circumstances prevented many applicants from knowing the damage status of their home. To address this unique challenge, FEMA waived the requirement that applicants report damage that impacted the habitability of their home. Additionally, in response to reports of applicants being unclear on their immediate disaster needs when they applied, FEMA also expanded eligibility to include applicants who reported displacement from their home at registration intake, and to those who updated their current location to somewhere other than their home. This allowed greater flexibility for those applicants that may not have been aware of their disaster needs or were confused by the intent of the questions when they initially registered.

FEMA works continuously to balance the needs of disaster survivors with FEMA’s duty as a steward of federal funding and its requirement to ensure assistance is provided to eligible applicants. FEMA has a duty under 408(i) of the Stafford Act to verify the person is eligible for FEMA assistance. Since 2017, when FEMA experienced an influx of fraudulent applications using stolen identities, FEMA has worked to put in place methods to identify fraud and minimize awarding assistance in those cases.

In response to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, FEMA recently implemented numerous policy changes designed to modify requirements for receiving disaster assistance through FEMA’s IHP. These modifications were designed to improve access to IHP assistance for people of color, people with disabilities, rural communities, and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

FEMA expanded the dates and types of documentation that applicants can submit to demonstrate that they occupied and/or owned their pre-disaster residence to ensure that documentation requirements are not overly restrictive or disadvantage certain subsets of disaster survivors.

<b>Question#:</b>	14
<b>Topic:</b>	Modify Requirements
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Robin Kelly
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

Applicants whose pre-disaster residence was a mobile home or travel trailer may now submit a written self-declarative statement of occupancy/ownership as a last resort and when standard documentation is unavailable.

Applicants whose home was passed down via heirship may submit a written self-declarative statement of ownership as a last resort.

FEMA also implemented Clean and Sanitize Assistance, which can provide limited financial assistance to applicants with disaster-caused real property damage but who do not qualify for Housing Assistance because the damage did not render the home uninhabitable.

To better address the needs of applicants who incurred a disaster-related disability, FEMA amended its Home Repair assistance policy to provide financial assistance for accessibility-related items when they are necessary to make the home safe and functional for someone who has a disaster-caused disability.

FEMA also implemented additional outreach efforts to ensure applicants understand how to appeal for additional assistance that may be available to them.

In 2022, FEMA will convene internal workgroups on a series of Individual Assistance (IA) policy topics to evaluate program improvements and policy changes for the next iteration of policy updates scheduled to be complete in 2023.

FEMA is also working to evaluate IHP regulations, and the effort has been published as part of DHS's Unified Agenda. As climate change results in more frequent and/or intense extreme weather events like severe storms, flooding, and wildfires, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable in society, FEMA proposes to amend its IA regulations to increase equity and ease of entry to the IA Program.

To provide a full opportunity for underserved communities to participate, FEMA proposes to amend application of 'safe, sanitary, and functional' for IA repair assistance; re-evaluate the requirement to apply for a Small Business Administration loan prior to receipt of Other Needs Assistance; add eligibility criteria for its Serious Needs & Displacement Assistance; amend its requirements for Continued Temporary Housing Assistance; re-evaluate its approach to insurance proceeds; and amend its appeals process. FEMA also proposes revisions to reflect changes to statutory authority that have not yet been implemented in regulation, to include provisions for utility and security deposit payments, lease and repair of multi-family rental housing, childcare assistance, and maximum assistance limits.

<b>Question#:</b>	15
<b>Topic:</b>	Building and Rebuilding Better
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Michael Cloud
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** As I asked you in the hearing, will you please let this committee know, in writing, within 14 days, when we can expect a proposed rule on the critical definition of "resilient" that FEMA is supposed to be basing eligibility determinations under the public assistance programs on, but has yet to be issued?

**Response:** FEMA is currently working on a regulatory update to 44 CFR to incorporate the definition of "resilience".

**Question:** Will you commit FEMA to adhering to congressional intent behind this section of the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act of 2018 in making eligibility determinations under the public assistance programs and support "building and rebuilding better to facilitate recovery efforts...[and] save [through] avoided disaster recovery costs."?

**Response:** FEMA remains committed to enhancing the resilience of disaster-impacted communities. The Disaster Section 1235(b) of the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA), requires FEMA to fund repair, restoration, reconstruction, or replacement in conformity with "the latest published editions of relevant consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards that incorporate the latest hazard-resistant design and establish minimum acceptable criteria for the design, construction, and maintenance of residential structures and facilities that may be eligible for assistance under the Act for the purposes of protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of a facility's users against disasters."

In response, FEMA has implemented its Interim Policy, FP 104-009-11 Version 2, "Consensus-Based Codes, Specifications and Standards for Public Assistance". The Interim Policy defines the framework and requirements for consistent and appropriate implementation of consensus-based design, construction and maintenance codes, specifications, and standards (referred to as consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards) for FEMA Public Assistance to promote resiliency and achieve risk reduction under the authority of the Stafford Act sections 323 and 406(e), as amended by the DRRA. Under this Interim Policy, all hazard vulnerable elements of FEMA Public Assistance funded projects must conform to the latest consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards. The application of consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards improves hazard resiliency thereby reducing damage from disasters which in turn reduces recovery costs.

In addition to enhancements to hazard resiliency through consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards, FEMA has several mitigation programs. These include FEMA's Public Assistance Mitigation as well as those from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant

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<b>Topic:</b>	Building and Rebuilding Better
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Program. The Public Assistance Program improves resiliency of damaged facilities by providing funding for cost-effective hazard mitigation measures that protect against future disaster damage.

<b>Question#:</b>	16
<b>Topic:</b>	Risk Rating 2.0
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Byron Donalds
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Can you speak to how Risk Rating 2.0 impacts donor states like my great state of Florida?

**Response:** FEMA launched the new Risk Rating 2.0: Equity in Action methodology on October 1, 2021 to address longstanding inequities in flood insurance pricing and to establish a system that is better equipped for the reality of frequent flooding caused by climate change across the over 22,500 communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). With the old rating system, some NFIP policyholders with lower-value homes were paying more than they should for their actual risk profile, and some policyholders with higher-value homes were paying less than they should. Risk Rating 2.0 addresses this inequity.

In Florida, 20 percent of policyholders will see immediate premium decreases of, on average, \$30 per month, or \$365 per year. Approximately 68 percent of policyholders will see increases between \$0 - \$10 dollars per month, which is about the same as the increases they saw under the old methodology. 8 percent will see increases between \$10-\$20 dollars per month. While it is true that some Florida policyholders, roughly 4 percent, will see increases in their premiums of \$20 or more per month, these policies tend to cover high-value homes and buildings located in high-risk areas.

For most policyholders who will see rate increases, FEMA will transition their policy premium gradually and within the 18 percent annual cap required by Congress. State profile information for Florida can be found here: <https://www.fema.gov/flood-insurance/risk-rating/profiles>.

**Question:** If a policy holder's rates were to go up based on their individual structure in 2022, and they later made structural changes to help mitigate flooding, would the structure then be reassessed for a lower rate?

**Response:** There are mitigation actions a property owner can take to lower their rate. For example, elevating the structure higher above the ground, elevating machinery and equipment, or using piers, posts or piles as a foundation type can reduce flood risk and reduce insurance premiums. Before undertaking any mitigation actions, property owners are encouraged to consult with their community floodplain manager and insurer to discuss the various mitigation options and the impacts on community compliance and insurance premiums. Communities can lower their flood risk and policyholders' premiums by participating in the Community Rating System (CRS) program or improving their community classification status in the CRS program. In Risk Rating 2.0 the CRS discount is maintained for existing policies. Further, the same CRS discount has been extended to and applies to all policies in the CRS community. In the legacy methodology, the CRS discount varied by flood zone or rating type. FEMA also encourages

<b>Question#:</b>	16
<b>Topic:</b>	Risk Rating 2.0
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Byron Donalds
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

communities to share information about potential mitigation options with policyholders, such as elevating their machinery and equipment, utilizing flood openings, and elevating current and future structures.

**Question:** What measures does FEMA have in place or could suggest to Congress to help policyholders who are financially strapped and could possibly be overwhelmed by Risk Rating 2.0?

**Response:** Affordability is currently an issue and will continue to be a concern with the implementation of Risk Rating 2.0. However, Risk Rating 2.0 did not cause the affordability challenge. It has existed for years. It was an issue when the program began in 1968 when flood insurance was not readily available and therefore very costly. FEMA acknowledges this concern; however, FEMA does not have the statutory authority to consider affordability in setting rates but has ensured the transition to new rates under Risk Rating 2.0 complies with all statutory caps on rate increases. In 2018 FEMA provided Congress with an Affordability Framework that provides a basic means tested approach to addressing the issue. The Affordability Framework provides options to ensure that the updated premium rates accurately reflect the current assessment of risk while recognizing the importance of equitable rates. Additionally, the FY22 President's Budget includes a legislative proposal that would establish a targeted means-tested assistance program for 1-4 family primary residences which the NFIP has included in our multi-year reauthorization outline.

If passed by Congress this targeted assistance program would offer low and moderate-income current and prospective NFIP policyholders a graduated risk premium discount benefit. However, FEMA would implement the program such that eligible policyholders would see both the full-risk price and the means-tested assistance they receive, allowing them to understand their full flood risk, which is imperative to building a nation that is resilient against the perils of flooding. FEMA and the Administration look forward to collaborating with Congress on ways to reduce barriers to purchasing flood insurance and pursuing mitigation options to achieve greater flood resiliency.

<b>Question#:</b>	17
<b>Topic:</b>	Water Quality Mitigation
<b>Hearing:</b>	Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Byron Donalds
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Do you feel that FEMA should consider water quality mitigation as a metric in their benefit cost analysis determination?

How does FEMA consider the short- and long-term regulatory flood control releases from federal structures when providing economic recovery to affected communities?

**Response:** FEMA intends to evaluate whether benefits from water quality mitigation could be incorporated into its benefit-cost analysis (BCA). FEMA’s BCA tool already allows for input of non-standard benefit categories; however, FEMA does not currently have guidance for estimating benefits associated with improved water quality. FEMA also notes that for some project types, improved water quality is already accounted for as an ancillary benefit. FEMA has established standard values for ecosystem services based on the post-mitigation land use type; the Riparian and Wetland values are partially comprised of benefits from water filtration. To use these benefits in a BCA, a mitigation project would need to result in the creation, enhancement, and/or restoration of riparian or wetland land.

FEMA does not provide funds for Federally owned dams.

Per FEMA P-93: *Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety*, all Federal agencies are responsible for the planning, design, construction, operation, or regulation of the dams they control. Moreover, Federal agencies are also responsible for, or involved with the site selection, certification or regulation, inspection, maintenance and operation, repair and ultimate disposition of dams and the review of practices which could affect the safety and integrity of these structures.

Damage to homes or state, territorial, tribal and local infrastructure caused by a release from a federal structure during a major disaster declaration may be eligible for FEMA assistance, depending on the circumstances.