

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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**MEMORANDUM**

**September 30, 2021**

**To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform**

**Fr: Committee Staff**

**Re: Hearing on “Hurricane Ida and Beyond: Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience”**

**On Tuesday, October 5, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and over Zoom**, the Committee will hold a hearing on recovery efforts following Hurricane Ida and actions needed to improve readiness and invest in resilience.

**I. BACKGROUND ON HURRICANE IDA**

On August 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida made landfall at Port Fourchon, Louisiana, as a category-four hurricane. Significant storm surge, hurricane-force winds, and flash flooding impacted the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and parts of Alabama.<sup>1</sup> Remnants of Hurricane Ida moved northeast and on September 1, 2021, unleashed record-breaking rain and significant flooding in the Northeast. President Biden approved emergency and major disaster declarations for Louisiana, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup>

**A. Ida’s Impacts on Louisiana Include 26 Deaths, Severe Damage to Electric Grid**

Hurricane Ida resulted in 26 deaths, including nine deaths due to excessive heat resulting from extended power outages.<sup>3</sup> Outside estimates put losses in Louisiana and Mississippi resulting from Hurricane Ida at \$27 billion to \$40 billion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Energy, *Hurricane Ida—Update #1* (Aug. 29, 2021) (online at [www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/TLP-WHITE\\_DOE%20Situation%20Update\\_Hurricane%20Ida\\_1.pdf](http://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/TLP-WHITE_DOE%20Situation%20Update_Hurricane%20Ida_1.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Hurricane Ida* (online at [www.fema.gov/disaster/hurricane-ida](http://www.fema.gov/disaster/hurricane-ida)) (accessed Sept. 23, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Louisiana Department of Health, *LDH: Hurricane Ida Storm-Related Death Toll Rises to 26* (Sept. 8, 2021) (online at <https://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/detail/6308>).

<sup>4</sup> *CoreLogic Estimates \$27 Billion to \$40 Billion in Insured and Uninsured Losses from Hurricane Ida Wind, Storm Surge and Inland Flooding*, CoreLogic (Sept. 1, 2021) (online at [www.corelogic.com/press-](http://www.corelogic.com/press-)

Hurricane Ida caused significant damage to the electrical transmission system in Louisiana, resulting in more than 1.1 million customers—including individual households, renters, and office buildings—without power and knocking out all eight transmission lines delivering power to New Orleans.<sup>5</sup> More than 30,000 utility poles were damaged by Hurricane Ida, compared to 17,000 utility poles damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.<sup>6</sup> Power outages persisted for weeks after Hurricane Ida passed, with some parishes in coastal Louisiana estimated to be without power through the end of September. According to the Chief Executive Officer of Entergy Louisiana, Philip May, “For many of these areas, this will not be a repair. It will be a rebuild.”<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Ida’s Impacts on Northeast Include over 60 Deaths and Catastrophic Flooding**

In the Northeast, at least 62 people were killed.<sup>8</sup> In New York, at least 13 people died from flooding, many perishing in basement units of residential homes. In New Jersey, at least 23 people died after being trapped in vehicles by floodwaters. Commuters were stranded in cars and the subway, nearly 500 vehicles were abandoned, and over 22,000 customers lost power.<sup>9</sup> Tornadoes tore through homes, farms, and trees in southern New Jersey resulting in over 40,000 customers losing power.<sup>10</sup> Outside estimates put losses in the Northeast resulting from Hurricane Ida at \$16 to \$24 billion.<sup>11</sup>

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releases/corelogic-estimates-27-billion-to-40-billion-in-insured-and-uninsured-losses-from-hurricane-ida-wind-storm-surge-and-inland-flooding/).

<sup>5</sup> Department of Energy, *Hurricane Ida—Update #3* (Aug. 31, 2021) (online at [www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/TLP-WHITE\\_DOE%20Situation%20Update\\_Hurricane%20Ida\\_3.pdf](http://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/TLP-WHITE_DOE%20Situation%20Update_Hurricane%20Ida_3.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> Entergy, *Restoration Times for Louisiana, Including Hardest Hit Areas* (online at [www.entergy.com/hurricaneida/etr/](http://www.entergy.com/hurricaneida/etr/)) (accessed Sept. 24, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> *Entergy Estimates That Most of City Should See Full Restoration by Wednesday; Estimates Not Yet Available for Hardest-Hit Areas of State*, The Lens (Sept. 3, 2021) (online at <https://thelensnola.org/2021/09/03/entergy-estimates-that-city-should-see-full-restoration-by-wednesday-estimates-not-yet-available-for-hardest-hit-areas-of-state/>).

<sup>8</sup> *Death Toll Rises After Chaotic Ida Flooding*, Wall Street Journal (Sept. 4, 2021) (online at [www.wsj.com/video/death-toll-rises-after-chaotic-ida-flooding/D9A7E877-C302-4F8D-B469-05BC4B9A0403.html](http://www.wsj.com/video/death-toll-rises-after-chaotic-ida-flooding/D9A7E877-C302-4F8D-B469-05BC4B9A0403.html)).

<sup>9</sup> *Ida Causes Massive Flooding, Killing at Least 45 in Northeast*, Wall Street Journal (Sept. 3, 2021) (online at [www.wsj.com/articles/ida-remnants-hit-northeast-with-rain-flooding-tornadoes-11630554939](http://www.wsj.com/articles/ida-remnants-hit-northeast-with-rain-flooding-tornadoes-11630554939)).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *CoreLogic Estimates \$16 Billion to \$24 Billion in Insured and Uninsured Flood Losses in the Northeast from Tropical Storm Ida*, CoreLogic (Sept. 8, 2021) (online at [www.corelogic.com/intelligence/protect-stories/hazard-hq/corelogic-estimates-16-billion-to-24-billion-in-insured-and-uninsured-flood-losses-in-the-northeast-from-tropical-storm-ida-2/](http://www.corelogic.com/intelligence/protect-stories/hazard-hq/corelogic-estimates-16-billion-to-24-billion-in-insured-and-uninsured-flood-losses-in-the-northeast-from-tropical-storm-ida-2/)).

Hurricane Ida dumped over nine inches of rain in the Northeast, which brought flash floods that overpowered aging stormwater systems, destroyed homes, and washed out roads.<sup>12</sup> The National Weather Service issued an emergency flash flood warning, noting, “[T]his particular warning for NYC is the second time we’ve ever issued a Flash Flood Emergency (It’s the first one for NYC). The first time we’ve issued a Flash Flood Emergency was for Northeast New Jersey a [sic] an hour ago.”<sup>13</sup>

## **II. EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS ARE MORE FREQUENT AND DAMAGING**

Multiple extreme weather events are occurring simultaneously and with more intensity across the United States, and nearly one in three Americans live in a county hit by a weather disaster in the past three months.<sup>14</sup> The unprecedented scale of climate change contributes to extreme heatwaves, heavy rainfall events, and major storms across the globe.

State and local governments are forced to contend with the costs and challenges resulting from climate change. For example, flooding from heavy rainstorms impacts both urban and rural communities, and each year wildfires burn millions of acres of land. Extreme weather has cascading impacts across the United States due to the interdependencies of transportation and critical infrastructure.<sup>15</sup>

Limiting the federal government’s fiscal exposures to climate change has been on the Government Accountability Office’s High-Risk List since 2013, in part because of concerns about the increasing costs of disaster response and recovery efforts. Over the past decade, the cost of such disasters in the United States averaged \$80.7 billion each year.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *More than 45 Dead After Ida’s Remnants Blindside Northeast*, Associated Press (Sept. 2, 2021) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/northeast-us-new-york-new-jersey-weather-60327279197e14b9d17632ea0818f51c>).

<sup>13</sup> National Weather Service (@NWSNewYorkNY), *Twitter* (Sept. 1, 2021) (online at <https://twitter.com/NWSNewYorkNY/status/1433244063961006080>).

<sup>14</sup> *Hurricanes, Wildfires, and Drought: US Finds Itself Battling Climate Disasters on Several Fronts*, CNN (Aug. 31, 2021) (online at [www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/us/hurricane-wildfires-climate-change-emergency-response/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/us/hurricane-wildfires-climate-change-emergency-response/index.html)); *Nearly 1 in 3 Americans Experienced a Weather Disaster This Summer*, Washington Post (Sept. 04, 2021) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/09/04/climate-disaster-hurricane-ida/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/09/04/climate-disaster-hurricane-ida/)).

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Global Change Research Program, *Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States* (2018) (online at [https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/downloads/NCA4\\_2018\\_FullReport.pdf](https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/downloads/NCA4_2018_FullReport.pdf)).

<sup>16</sup> Government Accountability Office, *The Nation’s Fiscal Health: After Pandemic Recovery, Focus Needed on Achieving Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability* (Mar. 23, 2021) (GAO-21-275SP) (online at [www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-275sp.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-275sp.pdf)).

**III. WITNESS**

**The Honorable Deanne Criswell**  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Staff contacts: Krista Boyd, Erinn Sauer, Jordan Blumenthal, Courtney Callejas, and Shirley Hwang at (202) 225-5051.