



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**  
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Research & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Jim Baird, PhD**

### **Joint Research & Technology and Environment Subcommittee Hearing** *Calm Before the Storm: Reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program*

December 4, 2019

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Good afternoon Chairwoman Stevens and Chairwoman Fletcher. Thank you both for holding this joint hearing today.

I look forward to hearing about the progress the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP) has made since its reauthorization in 2015.

Millions of Americans live in areas vulnerable to hurricanes, tornadoes and other windstorms.

Due to shifts in population, more than 50 percent of Americans now live on a coast or in tornado alley.

Americans today are more vulnerable than ever to severe weather events.

Every year families, communities, and businesses suffer as lives are lost and property is destroyed.

We spend billions of dollars each year on recovery efforts and these are only expected to grow.

That's why we need cost effective measures to reduce the impact of windstorms.

NWIRP was created to improve our understanding of windstorms and to encourage the implementation of cost-effective mitigation measures.

It will be good to hear how this program is proactively supporting research and development to save lives and reduce property damage caused by these horrific storms.

One key element of NWIRP is the coordination of Federal agency research efforts, in cooperation with other levels of government, academia, and the private sector.

One example of NWIRP's research efforts is the Natural Hazards Engineering Research Infrastructure network at the National Science Foundation.

NHERI provides a network of shared, state-of-the-art research facilities and tools at universities around the country to help us better understand and withstand the impacts of natural hazards.

Purdue University in my district is leading the NHERI Network Coordination Office.

The Coordination Office facilitates shared technical knowledge and best practices among the network of eight Experimental Facilities.

This network allows hazards researchers to explore and test ground-breaking concepts for protecting our homes, businesses and infrastructure lifelines, and to enable innovations that mitigate the damages from natural hazards.

The Office also leads education and outreach and the development of strategic partnerships around the world.

The goal is for these partnerships to lead to a coordinated, global natural-hazards engineering research infrastructure that fosters collaboration in new ways.

These critical investments also offer educational opportunities to the students who will engineer our communities and plan our disaster response in the future.

These investments in R&D activities support the creation of improved windstorm impact reduction measures, such as increased warning time and the development of safe room building guidance.

We know that these measures have the potential to save lives and reduce losses associated with hurricanes, tornados, and other severe wind hazards, but have not been widely adopted.

NWIRP is directed to conduct research and development to help improve building codes, voluntary standards, and construction practices to improve the resilience of structures to windstorms.

While it has seen some success, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how we can better improve the transfer of this research to the building code communities.

In addition, I look forward to hearing what steps NWIRP is taking to improve public outreach and information dissemination.

I would like to thank our witnesses for taking the time to join us today to share your experience and expertise.

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