

Disaster Preparedness

The Episcopal Church is committed to assisting those in need across the United States, our dioceses around the world, Anglican partners, and all who suffer. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster parishes and dioceses are on the front lines providing shelter, psychological care, food, diapers, and medicine as Episcopalians did in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This work has continued through the direct local efforts and aided by the Presiding Bishop's [pastoral visits](#) to dioceses that have experienced disasters, and the work of [Episcopal Relief and Development](#). In late May reports emerged that the death toll in Puerto Rico was in the thousands, in many cases not due to the immediate disaster but due to the national response to the disaster.

The U.S. and its territories are experiencing more frequently severe weather patterns. Fast-moving wildfires in California fueled by intense winds forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes resulting in more than 40 deaths and the destruction of more than 8,000 structures. Floods in West Virginia killed at least 23 people and hundreds of homes were severely damaged or destroyed. Last year we saw a severe hurricane season resulting in 17 named storms that caused widespread destruction. Five of these hurricanes impacted the U.S. causing large-scale damage across Texas, Florida, Georgia Louisiana, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

There is hope. Churches and civic organizations are ready and eager to help but face challenges to effectively deliver aid and help those in need. With better access and streamlined resources, these organizations can better address the aftermath of disasters. We call on all Episcopalians to advocate for assistance to help people build resilient lives that includes the actions below. You can also, [learn ways](#) to help [prepare your parish](#) for disasters.

Remove bureaucracy to pave the way for:

- Deploying Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) so coordination of cases can be supported by local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) organizations;
- Appointing Leading Partners from its local VOAD to have access to FEMA DCMP and effectively support mental health treatment in disaster impacted areas; and
- Hosting a roundtable with FEMA's local VOAD members to ensure proper preparedness for the 2018 hurricane season that began on June 1.

Increase funding for agencies and programs that build resilient lives, such as:

Department of Housing (HUD). The federal government [passed legislation earlier this year](#) to provide funding for mitigation by allocating \$28 billion to HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to repair homes, support businesses and rebuild infrastructure. It also designated \$12 billion to address future risks. For Fiscal Year (2019) (FY19), we call on Congress to assure this funding is allocated.

Wildfire Suppression: Department of Interior (DOI) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The [Administration's budget proposal](#) calls for 100 percent of the rolling 10-year average cost for wildfire suppression in the Department of Agriculture and the Interior. We call upon Congress to assure that this is adequate funding.

Communities: Department of Homeland Security. We request Congress to increase the funding for DHS to assist communities severely impacted and overwhelmed by disasters by a minimum of \$6.7 billion.

FEMA. Funding needs continue for equipping emergency responders so they can [be prepared](#) for natural or manmade disasters. The Administration's Budget proposes \$6.9 billion for the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund to ensure effective response to and recovery from emergencies and major disasters. This funding helps survivors get back on their feet while restoring essential community services and facilities. For FY19 we request Congress to provide \$1.9 billion for the FEMA Programs that award grants to State and local governments to help equip responders, and the \$6.9 billion for the FEMA.

