



# 119th U.S. Congress Public Policy Priorities:



# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



APWA’s more than 32,000 members applauded Congress for passing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), a \$1.2 trillion investment, and urges disbursement and expenditures of this funding for federal programs that support and strengthen the nation’s ability to mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters.

*When a natural disaster occurs, public works is the first to respond and the last to leave.* As first responders, public works professionals serve a vital role in ensuring national critical infrastructure functions during emergencies. We offer valuable first-hand perspectives that should be factored into how federal programs affecting emergency management, cybersecurity, and telecommunications are developed and implemented. The federal government emphasized the crucial role of public works through the enactment of Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-8 in 2003 (which has since been superseded by Presidential Policy Directive-8 in 2011), recognizing public works professionals as first responders. Public works, with varying degrees of oversight, is responsible for many of the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) [16 Critical Infrastructure Sectors](#).

### MITIGATION

Pre- and post-disaster mitigation are essential to protect against physical and financial harm. More than [750 Major Disaster and Emergency Disaster Declarations](#) for states and counties recorded by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) since 2020. APWA advocates for federal emphasis on mitigation through grants and training opportunities to assist in hardening our nation in preparing for disasters. Continue funding the Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities (BRIC), Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA), and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), which provide grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation projects.

### COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION

Efficient and operational communication among public works professionals and other first responders is required for effective preparedness, response, and recovery operations. As first responders, public works professionals must be included when developing, implementing, and executing cybersecurity and telecommunication policies and programs, such as the First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet.

### STREAMLINING

During the 118th Session of Congress, APWA advocated for the passage of S. 3648, the “Helping Eliminate Limitations for Prompt Response and Recovery Act”, which would repeal Section 695 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 and it would restrict the length of non-competitive DHS contracts for urgent and compelling requirements to 150 days. Removing Section 695 would ensure that DHS deadlines for emergency contracts follow

current government-wide rules that allow contracts of up to one-year. APWA argues that by granting agencies additional time to better vet their submissions for funding and providing the required paperwork simultaneously reducing the need for supplemental information at, or near, the deadline that often imperils the awarding of funds.

### CYBERSECURITY & TELECOMMUNICATION

In 2023, APWA premiered “Foundational Cybersecurity Concepts for Public Works Professionals”. This course, developed with input from federal partners, including the Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Agency (CISA), ensures that public works professionals are better able to avoid, react to, and anticipate cyber threats. This course emphasizes the importance of preparing APWA members for the ever evolving and ever present cybersecurity challenges.

### WORKFORCE

APWA supports dedicated and full federal funding for workforce programs authorized by IIJA. Stand-alone workforce legislation should promote flexibility of funds to stand up our nation’s workforce as well as enhance initiatives such as adult career and technical training opportunities. With our nation facing serious workforce shortages, our workforce is a high priority. As the leader in public works education and credentialing programs, APWA encourages and values continual education and professional growth opportunities for those who build, operate, and maintain our nation’s



infrastructure. Ensuring IIJA-authorized workforce development programs, such as the [Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development program](#), are fully funded will allow our workforce to remain well-trained and on the cutting edge of their career fields to best support our nation's infrastructure needs, economy, and quality of life.

### PRIORITY – MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Support the Safeguarding Tomorrow Through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act programs to provide funding to local governments for projects that reduce risks to homeowners, businesses, non-profit organizations, and communities. APWA recognizes the electrical grid as the backbone of today's society, and supports the promotion of hardening electrical systems, including transmission and distribution operations, promoting, and advancing physical security and cybersecurity plans and projects. Since the most recent NFIP multi-year extension expired in 2017, the program has been extended more than 30 times. Congress created NFIP under the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to provide insurance coverage to property owners for damages and losses due to catastrophic flooding. Continuously extending NFIP is not sustainable. APWA advocates for the enactment of a five-year NFIP authorization to give Congress time to develop a viable, longer-term solution. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported that the U.S. has sustained [391 weather and climate disasters since 1980](#) in which overall damages/costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion, including Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment to 2024. The total cost of these events exceeds \$2.75 trillion. As of July 9, 2024, there have been [15 weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding \\$1 billion](#).

### PRIORITY – COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand opportunities for public works professionals within the context of congressional and federal regulatory actions, and for funding and programs for training and implementation as they often have responsibility or direct oversight for systems that operate and protect assets, systems, and networks in the country's critical infrastructure sectors. Public works professionals must be included when developing, funding, and executing telecommunication policies, programs, congressional and federal regulatory actions. Continue collaborating with all utility providers within the same Right of Way (ROW) to ensure an efficient restoration of services during disasters. Water/wastewater/electric/telecommunications public works representatives must be included in planning debris removal activities to prevent additional unforeseen damage to utilities, which are being restored. Congress established FirstNet to oversee the development of a nationwide broadband network for public safety—a network that prioritizes public safety and provides an interoperable platform for exchanging data. Public works can subscribe to FirstNet as an Extended Primary User. APWA has been a valued member of the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) since its inception, supporting efforts to include broad interoperability into FirstNet.

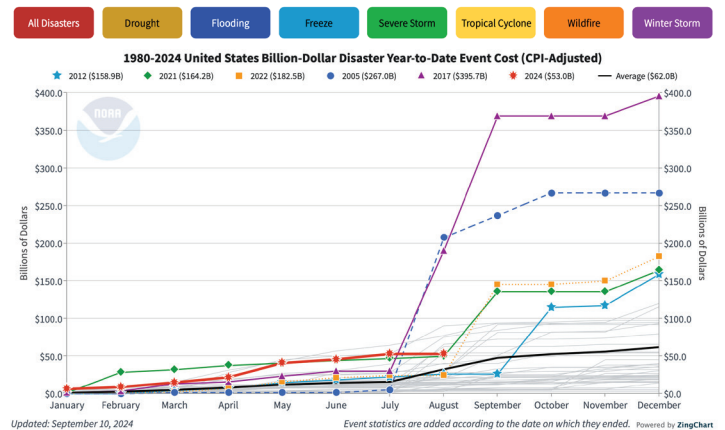
### PRIORITY – STREAMLINING/RECOMMENDATIONS

Flexibility is needed to allow small agencies and financially burdened entities to receive this incentive via adoption of debris-management best practices or other means. Federal training programs must be designed to enhance interagency cooperation in emergency management including public works response aspects. Award grants based on estimates and allow FEMA to make grants based on estimates for large projects (up to \$500,000). Enact an increased Federal Share Incentive to allow FEMA to provide an additional five percent federal cost share for debris removal projects under Sections 403(a)(3)(A) and 407 of the Stafford Act and for applicants with pre-qualified two or more debris and wreckage removal contractors.

### PRIORITY – CYBERSECURITY & TELECOMMUNICATION/SYSTEMS RECOMMENDATIONS

Require collaboration between public works, telecommunication, and radio network providers to build resilient systems to provide services in times of natural and man-made disasters. Ensure the inclusion of public works when developing, funding, implementing, and executing cybersecurity and telecommunication policies and programs. Include public works in the establishment and implementation of National Cybersecurity Guidelines/Best Practices to deliver more opportunities for public works professionals with responsibility or direct oversight for systems that operate and protect assets, systems, and networks of the country's critical infrastructure sectors. APWA believes the federal government should not decrease the federal share over the life of the funding of cybersecurity grants. APWA advocates for provisions to ensure access for public works to funding opportunities over the life of grant programs. Establish Voluntary National Cybersecurity Guidelines/Best Practices and include public works in developing and implementing these recommendations.

APWA stands ready to work with Congress and the federal government by offering professional resources and experiences to address our nation's infrastructure and emergency management needs, and to support the inclusion of language that reflects such targets within future legislative packages that will be necessary to address our nation's infrastructure needs.



The public works sector is included with law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and emergency management in the emergency services sector of the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. It is critical to the safety of all citizens and to the sustainability of our communities that the public, government agencies, and other professional and technical organizations recognize and support the contributions of public works in all hazards emergency management. APWA represents over 32,000 public works professionals in North America dedicated to providing essential and high quality services to millions of people in rural and urban communities, both small and large. APWA members are among the first to arrive and the last to leave during natural disasters and other harmful events. APWA members are always there.

**APWA Government Affairs  
119th United States Congress  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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