

FEMA Designates First Communities to Receive Targeted Assistance for Hazards Resilience

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WASHINGTON – Today, FEMA is announcing the initial designation of 483 census tracts that will be eligible for increased federal support to become more resilient to natural hazards and extreme weather worsened by the climate crisis. Congress directed FEMA to make these designations in the Community Disaster Resilience Zones Act of 2022 and implement this bipartisan legislation to help build resilience to natural hazards in communities most at-risk due to climate change.

FEMA will use [Community Disaster Resilience Zones](#) designations to direct and manage financial and technical assistance for resilience projects. For example, for federal agencies, the legislation provides additional federal cost-share for projects in designated zones. The zone designations can also help the private sector, nonprofits, philanthropies, and other non-federal partners target investments in community resilience.

The act aims to increase resilience efforts and preventative measures designed to address underserved communities most at risk to natural hazards. Consistent with legislative direction, FEMA considered natural hazard risk from a national and state level while accounting for factors that reflect disaster impacts felt by coastal, inland, urban, suburban and rural communities. FEMA also ensured that each state has at least one Community Disaster Resilience Zone in these initial designations.

“These designations will help ensure that the most at-risk communities are able to build resilience against natural hazards and extreme weather events, which are becoming increasingly intense and frequent due to climate change,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “This aligns with Congress’ direction and other FEMA initiatives to get federal support and resources to the communities that need them most.”



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This initial set of designations covers all 50 states and the District of Columbia. These designations can be explored on an [interactive map on FEMA's website](#). Additional information on the designation methodology and criteria is available. More Community Disaster Resilience Zone designations, including tribal lands and territories, are expected to be announced in the fall of 2023.

An additional designation of zones will occur in 12-18 months based on updates to the [National Risk Index](#), lessons learned from these initial designations, and stakeholder input. Examples of planned updates to the National Risk Index include additional data on tsunami and riverine flood risk.

This new law amends the [Robert T. Stafford Disaster Recovery and Emergency Act](#) to direct use of a natural hazard risk assessment index, like [FEMA's National Risk Index](#), to identify communities which are most at risk of the effects of natural hazards and climate change. For these designations, this methodology uses a tailored version of the National Risk Index that includes socioeconomic status, household characteristics, house type and transportation themes from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Social Vulnerability Index](#).

The designation methodology also advances the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government commitment to environmental justice by incorporating the [White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#), which identifies disadvantaged communities that are underserved and overburdened by pollution and climate risk.

Designated zones will have prioritized access to federal funding for resilience and mitigation projects. For example, this fall, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will make awards for the [Climate-Smart Communities Initiative program](#) funded by the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) to accelerate the pace and reduce the cost of climate resilience-building for communities across the United States. NOAA will work with communities to co-develop equitable climate resilience plans that can be readied for funding and implementation. The priority is to assist communities that are at the highest risk to climate impacts and have the most need for assistance, such as the FEMA-identified Community Disaster Resilience Zones.

The vision for the Community Disaster Resilience Zone Act, passed with bipartisan support in December 2022, is to leverage collaboration and cross-



sector coordination across all levels of government, philanthropic foundations, private non-profits, universities, the insurance industry and private businesses.

FEMA will continue to engage the public as it refines the natural hazard risk assessment methodology to designate the zones, consults with local jurisdictions and implements post-designation support from a range of public and private resources.

