

# 20 Years After Hurricane Katrina

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WASHINGTON — Today, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) commemorates the 20-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, honoring the lives lost, the families forever changed and the extraordinary resilience of survivors and communities across the Gulf Coast.

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana and Mississippi as a Category 3 hurricane. It became one of the most devastating disasters in U.S. history, claiming nearly 1,400 lives, displacing approximately 770,000 people and causing billions of dollars in economic losses and infrastructure damage. Federal disaster declarations ultimately covered about 90,000 square miles across the region. New Orleans and neighboring parishes were among the hardest hit by catastrophic flooding. An estimated 100,000 to 150,000 people did not, or were unable to, evacuate from the city, prompting a massive national and international response.

To date, FEMA has provided communities affected by Hurricane Katrina with more than \$6.6 billion in Individual Assistance for housing and other needs, and more than \$17.1 billion in Public Assistance to help rebuild critical infrastructure like schools, hospitals, roads and bridges.

The federal government's response to Katrina led to significant scrutiny and a comprehensive reexamination of how the nation prepares for and manages large-scale disasters. In 2006, Congress enacted the [Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act](#), which established FEMA as a distinct agency within the Department of Homeland Security, defined FEMA's primary mission and authorized the pre-positioning of federal assets – including essential commodities, equipment and search and rescue personnel – for deployment at a state's request ahead of a disaster. Even with this progress, FEMA continues to reform and improve how the agency works to support states before, during and after disasters.

