Speaker 1: [00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.46) I'm Mark Peterson, and this is the FEMA podcast. Disaster, resilience and relief are priorities for FEMA and the organizations we work with, including Fannie Mae and also the communities that we serve. It's central to our mission of ensuring access to safe and affordable housing after disasters. So in honor of national preparedness month, we sat down with Alex Amparo, assistant administrator for FEMA’s national preparedness directorate, along with Mike Hernandez, vice president for housing access and disaster response and rebuild at Fannie Mae. We discussed the importance of preparing for better financial outcomes after disasters. Okay. Well thank you so much Alex Amparo, who is the assistant administrator for FEMA’s national preparedness director. Thanks so much Alex for joining me. Oh, it's great to be here. And then a special guest, Mike Hernandez, who is the vice president for housing access in disaster response and, and rebuild at Fannie Mae. I'm, I'm thrilled to have you on the podcast, Mike.

Speaker 2: [01:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=70.7) Mark, thanks for having me. Looking forward to it.

Speaker 1: [01:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=73.82) So we're going to talk a lot about important decisions that people need to make to prepare for disasters. And it's a really fun way to do it between having FEMA’s preparedness directorate and Fannie Mae together talking about some of the topics that we don't normally cover when we think about disaster resiliency and preparedness at least from a FEMA perspective. So, you know, one of the things that we know is that preparedness is not just about sandbags and shutters. So Mike, how can people prepare more than just their homes for disasters?

Speaker 2: [01:47](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=107.16) Yeah, Mark, it's an excellent question when I'm, you know, when I think about the question, one of the first things that tech it reminds me of is that old 80’s song by Molly Hatchet, you really are flirting with disaster if you don't have a plan in place, if you're not thinking about the, the challenges that you might face, and when you're in the midst of a disaster, that the last thing you want to be doing is trying to figure out what you're going to do and how you're gonna do it. You know, one of the most important things that you can have that you always have with you is your phone. And it's probably the, one of the biggest lifesavers after disasters. You may not have access to your house or two important documents and information that you need, but if you've taken the time before to prepare and made pictures of those documents and have them on your phone, then you'll be better prepared to be able to deal with all the issues and information that you're gonna need following a natural disaster. Unfortunately for my family, we had a small fire in our home several years ago and you know, one of the things we we did immediately, everybody was fine, but I'm having pictures of the house that we had taken beforehand and had them filed away. And then the pictures that we took during was tremendously helpful and in getting our insurance process started rapidly and accurately and really helped us mitigate our, our our inconvenience and challenge and rebuilding.

Speaker 1: [03:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=200.44) You know, Mike, I, if I could just follow up the, I'm sorry that you experienced that fire. And I can speak to the other side of those things. I remember a couple years ago in the middle of the day, I got a call from my sister and she had a house fire as well. And speaking from the opposite perspective, she didn't have those photos. And the process of making the claim with the insurance company was a much more lengthy process than I think it would have been had she had taken some next steps. Yeah, absolutely. You know, Alex, you know, I think it's no secret that saving money and having insurance and taking these pictures is a, is a great way to defend against disasters or at least prepare yourself for the financial impacts of disasters. But it's also about you know, working with your families. Right?

Speaker 3: [04:04](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=244.78) Yeah, no, you know, it strikes me as we're having this conversation this morning that disasters for very personal, right. The impacts of disasters in just both of your examples are very personal. And I think that disaster preparedness should also be personal. I see it as a, as a real civic duty. I mean, it's is the, the, the rent we pay for, for living in this great country. And so we really need to look at a personal view of disaster preparedness. And that includes you and your family, you know, and the conversations that you're having at the dinner table. And talking to your kids about what to do in certain types of emergencies. Not being scared, but being prepared for ever eventuality may happen and they will happen in our lifetime. And so having that conversation and some of the resources that we have on ready.gov/kids helps you with that conversation, that very personal, a conversation that you internalize and you say, Hey, look, you know what, we as a family have made the commitment to ensure that, that we're ready and that we'll be best prepared should anything happen.

Speaker 3: [05:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=313.99) Like a home fire like an earthquake, a tornado. Those things happen in, they're happening, you know, everyday across American. So we've got to figure out how best we can get folks to really internalize it and take it personally.

Speaker 1: [05:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=328.7) You know Alex, the third week of preparedness month is all about teaching kids how to prepare for disasters. What have you found it important to spend the time during the, at least one of the weeks of preparedness month focused on kids?

Speaker 3: [05:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=343.36) Absolutely. Look, what we're really trying to gain here is a good habits, right? And we know when you start young and when you start young and start talking about things like budgeting and like saving it's a lifelong habit, right? That you train yourself in. And so among the many strategies that we're pursuing to ensure that we're building a culture of preparedness is by starting young and having kids have this discussion and having kids begin to talk about what their budget is and having kids talk about how saving is important. And by doing that one they're influencing their family. No doubt. And so when a kid comes home from school and says, mom and dad, do we have a weather radio? Why don't we have a weather radio? What is our plan? What should we do? And so those are very important things where kids can prompt parents, but at the same time, they're building a lifelong habit of being a prepared citizen.

Speaker 1: [06:51](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=411.63) Absolutely. you know, according to the Institute of business and home safety, 25% of businesses don't reopen after a severe weather event. I mean, that's pretty astounding because if a person's place of work is destroyed, you know, it could disrupt their income long term. You know, it, it sets them on a path that maybe have to, you know, find temporary positions and it really disrupts the, both the family and also the earning power. How can people financially prepare for a disaster? And you know, Alex, maybe we could toss this to you first.

Speaker 3: [07:24](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=444.06) Sure. It's, you know obviously it's about saving money, right? It's about being in, having the financial means. And so it begins with the conversation about what's the income that comes into my household and what goes out or the income that comes into our business and what goes out. And really understanding that having emergency cash on hand to be ready for again, whatever happens, right? And if you have to evacuate, not having to worry about, do I have or am I financially ready to stay the night in a hotel and out of harms way. Right? Let that not be a factor in the equation. So take that off the table. There's also a confidence that comes from that and there is no doubt about it. It's, there's a confidence that that sets the tone for both of your response in your recovery for whatever happens.

Speaker 1: [08:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=498.83) You know, Mike, a Fannie Mae has taken an active role in this space, right?

Speaker 2: [08:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=502.49) Absolutely. Mark, one of the things that we recognized, and you're absolutely right, it's not just families that are impacted directly by natural disaster, but it could be their place of work. And very few families unfortunately across the country have had very nominal savings. So if they're out of work for a week or two or three, that has a significant financial impact for them. So recognizing that one of the things that we did about a year or so ago is we stood up a new service, a free service called the disaster response network. And it's in partnership with ClearPoint, which is a national, not for profit counseling agency. And what they provide to homeowners with a Fannie Mae own loan is information about how to create that savings plan and create some of those savings cushions, how to create a financial evaluation of their current situation so that they can better prepare, reviewing their insurance policies to see if they've got an adequate coverage and where they may have gaps and also help them with their longterm shelter planning in advance.

Speaker 2: [09:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=572.82) As, as Alex said earlier, I mean, you've got to have that and you've got to have it in advance and you have to have it planned ahead of time. You know, it's very easy to have if you've missed work a couple of weeks to have your bills start to stack up. So one of the other things that we always provide in a natural disaster is allow borrowers to be able to get some type of mortgage relief so that they don't have to go into a longterm default on their mortgage. We want them to be able to get through this disaster as expeditiously as, as they can and folks can go on our website, knowyouroptions.com to get more information. But I think it's critical for, for bars to be able to think about that ahead of time and to know that there are options out there working with their lenders, working with their servicers and now working through our disaster response network at Fannie Mae.

Speaker 1: [10:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=627.55) Yeah. You know, Alex the idea of financial preparedness is, is a relatively new concept to FEMA. It's not one of the areas where we've really focused on, but in the recent years we've really take taken a more leadership approach in in preparing people financially. Why has that been important to the agency?

Speaker 3: [10:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=645.63) Sure. well, so what we found in, in, in our research and studies and, and what we've seen in the field is that you know, finances as an indicator of preparedness is six times greater than any other indicators. So I know how prepared you are more by your finances than your geographic location. Your school, your background, your ethnicity, your gender finances are a key indicator in as such, we know that folks that are financially prepared have the propensity to recover and that's what's in greatest interest. And so we found ourselves in in, in this space knowing and knowing the, the awful impacts of disasters and how they impact communities and individuals and want to get ahead of that. And so what we're telling them folks right now is, look, let's get ready right now so that when disasters happen, because they will it is something that we can overcome together.

Speaker 3: [11:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=703.5) And so for those that can and are able to right now take a look at their finances and get themselves in a shape, they are actually getting a headstart for any eventuality that comes. And so we've taken some partnerships like this one with Fannie Mae and you know, looking at the conversations that mortgage lenders have with individuals throughout the country. Right? It's one of the most important decisions that they make in purchasing a home. And so we know that there's a trusted relationship there between the lender and an individual and a family. And so having that conversation at the same time of, yes, here's the keys to your home and this, make sure that you're financially prepared. Let's make sure that you have adequate insurance coverage. Let's make sure that you have flood insurance. You know, those are all key things that can be critical success factors, post disaster.

Speaker 1: [12:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=760.12) You know, I think what we're really talking about is a holistic approach to disaster preparedness and a comprehensive preparedness plan. And, and you know, Mike, I want to talk about something that I think is really exciting am I, I'm really into sort of home improvement projects and things that make the home more efficient and more resilient. So, you know, Mike talked to me a little bit about some of the exciting things that Fannie Mae has done in the idea of building for resiliency.

Speaker 2: [13:07](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=787.02) Yeah. Market. It's, it's such an important step and yes, you gotta prepare financially and there's a lot of logistics and having your, your plan. But it really all starts with having as a resilient home living in a, in a, in an environment that can withstand some of nature's most, you know, dramatic events. One of the things we realize is that many homeowners might've had a hard time financing some of those improvements that they wanted to make for their properties. And so we introduced what we call our home style renovation mortgage products. So if you have an existing property or actually buying a property and you want to add some elements to it that will enhance its overall resiliency, you can now finance that into your mortgage and things such as you may live in a lower line area and need a berm or some type of retaining wall to protect, protect you from potential flooding or adding storm resistant windows so that not only you have a greener home and a more energy efficient home, but now you've got some protection against some harsh winds and roof upgrades, providing a more structurally integrity structural roof that'll provide you some significant protection during a major storm.

Speaker 2: [14:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=868.14) And then also some of the simple things that you can do, like using Simpson straps to in the construction process or the remodeling process to be able to hold down your roof system better. And even minor things like a gluing down your first level of shingles. So if they're better protected against the wind, all of that you could combine into product that, that you can then finance and have a much better, much more resilient property.

Speaker 1: [14:58](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=898.87) So, Alex, once you have a more resilient home you need to make sure that you have the supplies right.

Speaker 3: [15:04](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=904.75) That's absolutely right. I mean, this is the fundamental blocking and tackling of preparedness. You know, making sure that you have a kit, whether it's at, at home or and at home and at work in your car. Having those things that are, you know, the basics, the foundations of being able to sustain yourself. Water, nonperishable foods, a flashlight and batteries, you know, Hand crank radios, you know, those types of things that will help you in a time that you need them most if you have medications, making sure that you have them on hand for your important papers is as Mike mentioned early on, you know, those pictures that he took. And those are the things that are a fundamental, it doesn't have to be a, and hope everyone listening knows that this isn't, it doesn't have to be complicated at very, at a basic level doing these things changes outcomes.

Speaker 1: [15:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=956.63) You know, I just am curious how did the partnership come about? How did a, this relationship of working together and sharing this important information come about?

Speaker 3: [16:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=965.14) Well, you know, it's a, I think as you mentioned Mark it’s, we're looking at a, a variety of different strategies. And part of those strategies is how do we get to the, the word out for Fannie Mae has been a leader in disaster preparedness. And we struck this partnership because we've got a, a common mission here. And that is how do we make sure that our nation is best prepared? And so it was a natural for us to come together around this area of financial preparedness and preparedness in general. And that's how I see it. Mike, what do you say?

Speaker 2: [16:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1001.04) Oh, absolutely. Alex for Fannie Mae, one out of every three mortgages in this country is financed by Fannie Mae. So in every market where there's a natural disaster, FEMA is critical to the longterm rebuilding and Fannie Mae is focused on its longterm rebuilding. And so the partnership around how do we leverage each other's funds and resources and knowledge and experience to help these communities recover more quickly is, is really our focus. And then on the financial side, as Alex said, the more we can help families from the, from their youngest age, all the way through to better understand and prepare to be thinking always about what are they doing to protect themselves longterm, that's important to all of us. And that really will help families recover. So working with FEMA makes all the sense in the world for us and we're very happy to be in partnership with them.

Speaker 1: [17:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/_IqDyVGWvI3-JM0sREuN5NcoLMTbNEhhw1HmprKiIvMGr4ZwqdYAOPdwPbWPmtiYBlKa5Tvrj6f3chms6fxEvpk9IPw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1057.99) We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and future episodes. Help us to improve the podcast by rating us and leaving a comment. If you have ideas for future topics, send us an email at fema-podcast@fema.dhs.gov If you'd like to learn more about this episode or other topics, visit fema.gov/podcast.