



## Policy Alert: State and Local Disaster Preparedness

*Updated 21 March 2025*

**Action:** Executive Order “[Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness](#)”

**What it does:** The Order states that “Federal policy must rightly recognize that preparedness is most effectively owned and managed at the State, local, and even individual levels, supported by a competent, accessible, and efficient Federal Government”—a change from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) taking the lead in most disaster response. It seeks to reduce the complexity of disaster response and better meet the citizens’ needs by enabling state and local governments to better understand and prepare for disaster events through streamlining Federal preparedness and response policies.

In another area, risk management, the Order directs National Security Advisor Michael Waltz to launch a National Resilience Strategy “that articulates the priorities, means, and ways to advance the resilience of the Nation” within 90 days. It also establishes a National Risk Register “that identifies, articulates, and quantifies natural and malign risks to our national infrastructure, related systems, and their users” to inform the intelligence community, private sector investments, state investments, and Federal budget priorities.

### Key Insights

- The Order reflects statements from the President about reducing the role of the

Federal government in disaster response. Earlier, the President had established a FEMA Agency Council to make recommendations on “revisions, rescissions, and replacements necessary to reformulate the process and metrics for Federal responsibility” in disaster preparedness and response.

- [Visiting](#) disaster zones in California and North Carolina in January, the President said that FEMA “has been a very big disappointment” and that he was considering “getting rid of it.”
- That decision will have to await the report of the Agency Council (and Congress would have to agree). But this Order envisions a [continued](#) role for FEMA in some capacity. States and localities would struggle with response to major disasters on their own, stretching state budgets. The Order is designed to reduce costs by increasing preparedness, but many of these costs would also likely be borne by state and local governments, the private sector, and individuals.
- More than 1,000 FEMA employees have been [dismissed](#) since January 20; the agency had already been struggling with personnel shortages. A 2023 [report](#) by the US Government Accountability Office found that FEMA in FY 2022 had a 35 percent gap in necessary staffing and a heavy workload of managing rising disaster activity increased burnout and led to retention issues.
- The Order [shifts](#) national critical infrastructure policy from an “all-hazards” approach to a “risk-informed approach, prioritizing resilience and action over mere information sharing.” This could, however, lead to less sharing of information over time for some potential hazards depending on how the new approach is implemented.

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