



Major Disaster Assistance from the DRF: Florida

Overview

The Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is the primary source of funding used to provide assistance following a major disaster declaration. The authority to declare a major disaster is provided to the President under the Robert T. Stafford Emergency Relief and Disaster Assistance Act (P.L. 93-288).

The information below includes only the funding provided as a result of a major disaster declaration, not other assistance funded through the DRF. Furthermore, this information does not include other federal sources of disaster assistance, such as Small Business Administration disaster loans.

FEMA administers disaster relief through regional offices around the country. Florida is part of Region IV, headquartered in Atlanta, GA.

Major Disaster Declarations: FY2000-FY2015

A total of 25 major disaster declarations were made in the state of Florida between FY2000 and FY2015. During that time, there were also nine requests for major disaster declarations that were denied. The approved declarations led to \$10.8 billion in federal obligations from the Disaster Relief Fund. This funding does not include the assistance that was provided directly by the state, either as a cost-share for federal assistance or through the state’s own authorities and programs. There was a high level of variation in the amount of funding obligated each year, with more than \$6.24 billion obligated for disasters in FY2004 alone.

Figure 1 displays the total funding obligated to Florida each fiscal year. The highest number of declarations in one year occurred in FY2001, which had five declarations.

Significant Incidents

The largest Disaster Relief Fund assistance to the state of Florida was for Hurricane Wilma in FY2006. This incident led to more than \$2.57 billion in federal funding from the DRF.

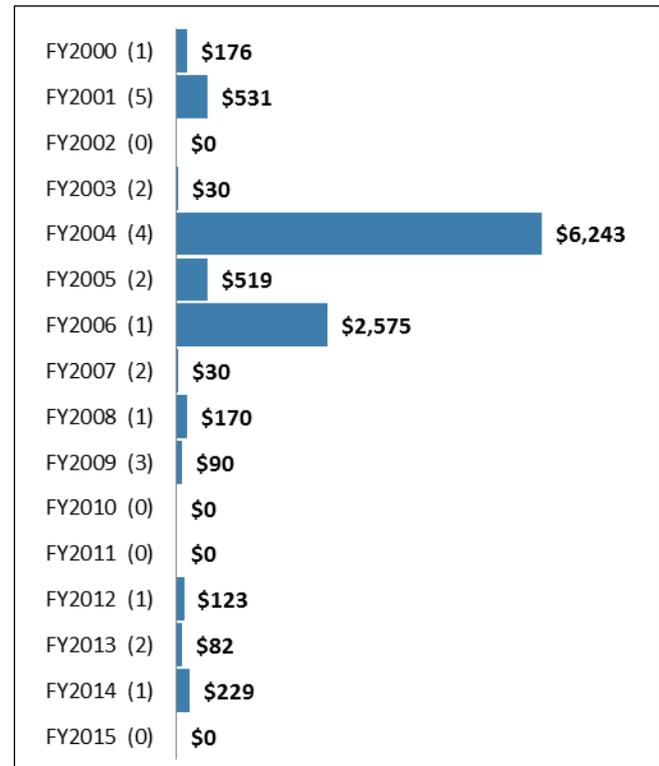
Other major incidents include Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne in FY2004.

Local Impact

From 2000 to 2015, 68 county governments in Florida received aid under a major disaster declaration. Collier County received aid for the highest number of declarations during this period, with 13.

Figure 1. DRF Obligations for Declared Major Disasters in Florida, by Fiscal Year

Figures are in millions of dollars, truncated. The number of declarations per year is in parentheses.



Source: CRS analysis of FEMA DRF obligations data as of December 2015.

Notes: Figures above reflect both actual obligations and projected obligations. Actual and projected obligations are recorded in the fiscal year in which the major disaster was declared. Only obligations from the FEMA DRF are included. Please consult the “Additional Resources” section for information on other federal assistance programs.

Types of Assistance Provided for Major Disasters

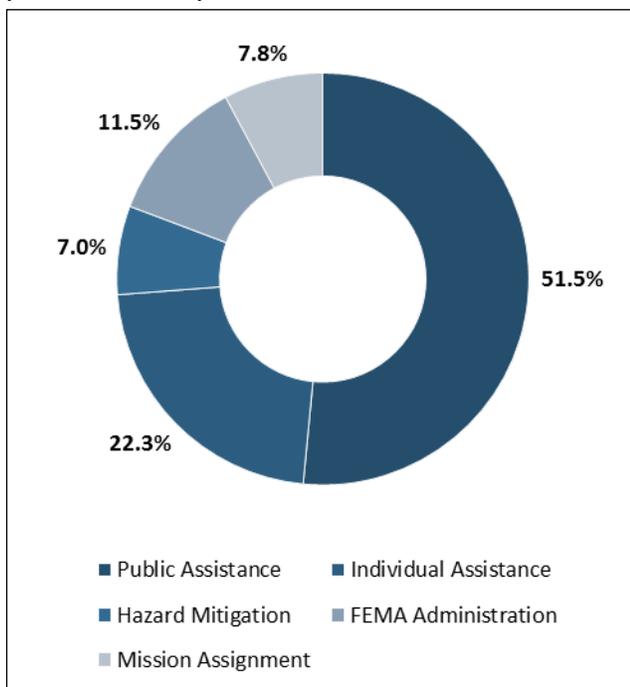
A major disaster declaration can include funding for different purposes, depending on the needs of the state. These purposes include:

- Public Assistance (PA), which is used by state, tribal, territorial, or local governments to provide emergency protective services, conduct debris removal operations, and repair or replace damaged public infrastructure;
- Individual Assistance (IA), which provides direct aid to impacted households;

- Hazard Mitigation (HM), which funds resilience projects and programs, typically across the entire state;
- FEMA administrative costs associated with each disaster declaration; and
- Mission Assignment, which tasks and reimburses other federal entities that provide direct disaster assistance.

The decision concerning which categories of assistance to provide is made either when the major disaster is declared or when amendments to the declaration are made. For many major disasters, all of the assistance categories outlined above are authorized. For others, some assistance categories are not included. **Figure 2** compares the amounts expended for different categories of assistance provided to Florida from FY2000 to FY2015.

Figure 2. DRF Assistance for Florida, by Type (FY2000-FY2015)



Source: CRS analysis of FEMA DRF obligation data as of December 2015.

Note: The types of assistance within each of the identified categories may have changed in the period FY2000-FY2015.

Other Assistance Funded Through the DRF

In addition to the major disasters listed above, there are other forms of assistance that are funded through the Disaster Relief Fund. These include Emergency Declarations and Fire Management Assistance Grants. The assistance associated with these declarations typically results in lower obligation levels than major disaster declarations, although there is significant variation across incidents.

Emergency Declarations are often made at the time a threat is recognized in order to assist state, local, and tribal efforts prior to an incident.

Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) provide aid for the control, management, and mitigation of fires.

Additional Resources

There are many existing CRS products that address issues related to the Disaster Relief Fund, the disaster declaration process, and the National Flood Insurance Program. Below is a list of several of these resources:

- CRS Report R41981, *Congressional Primer on Responding to Major Disasters and Emergencies*
- CRS Report R43519, *Natural Disasters and Hazards: CRS Experts*
- CRS Report R43784, *FEMA's Disaster Declaration Process: A Primer*
- CRS Report R43537, *FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund: Overview and Selected Issues*
- CRS Report R44619, *FEMA Disaster Housing: The Individuals and Households Program—Implementation and Potential Issues for Congress*
- CRS Report R43990, *FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program: Background and Considerations for Congress*
- CRS Report R44593, *Introduction to FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)*

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