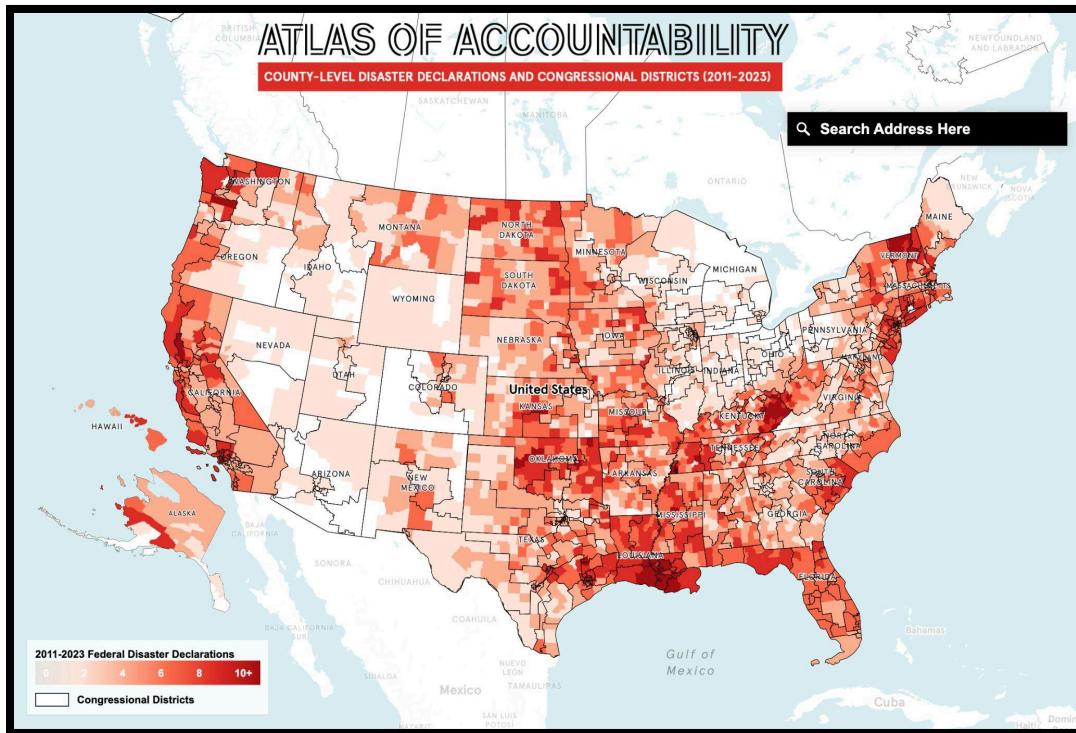


REBUILD BY DESIGN

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Rebuild by Design Launches Atlas of Accountability, Mapping County-Level Disaster Declarations Across Congressional Districts In All 50 States

New Report Finds 91% of Congressional Districts Experienced At Least One Major Federal Disaster (2011-2023), Calls for Further Investments in Disaster Preparedness



July 23, 2024 | As extreme weather continues to hit the United States from coast to coast, [Rebuild by Design](#) is launching the [Atlas of Accountability](#), a new mapping tool designed to help communities and policymakers understand their localized exposure to extreme weather disasters and the benefits of investments in resilient infrastructure that can make communities safer.

The analysis finds that from 2011-2023:

- 91% of congressional districts have been hit by at least one federally-declared climate disaster.
- 72% of states have had more than 10 disaster declarations.
- Every county in 24 states has had a disaster declaration.
- Of the 23 congressional districts that have experienced 10 or more disasters, over two-thirds are represented by Republicans while nearly one-third are represented by Democrats.

Such experience across the political spectrum and American geography emphasizes the urgency of bipartisan cooperation and the need to unite across the urban-rural divide.

"Our research clearly shows that extreme weather is not a partisan issue," **said Amy Chester, Director of Rebuild by Design at New York University.** "Constituents all over the U.S. are suffering through these events, with lasting consequences. Now is the time to shift those post-disaster dollars to programs that help communities *prepare* for climate events so they do not need to suffer first."

Rebuild by Design's [Atlas of Accountability](#) is an interactive map that allows users to identify past federal disaster declarations and recovery funding for climate-driven events county-by-county, and congressional representatives district-by-district. In the wake of a disaster, recovery funding is essential for helping communities get critical infrastructure running again and preparing for future events. The National Association of Building Sciences [found](#) that \$1 invested pre-disaster can save up to \$11 of taxpayer money after a storm.

The [Atlas of Accountability](#) looks at where two major pools of funding, totaling \$106.4 billion, have been allocated after extreme events:

- To address immediate public sector and infrastructure recovery, over \$62.6 billion has moved to local governments through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation programs.
- \$43.8 billion of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant-DR funding went to supporting post-disaster investments.

Other data resources in the analysis include: allocations of FEMA funding (Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation) by county; total amounts of funding to states after disasters (FEMA and HUD); and a link to detailed and downloadable 2021 state data that shows each state's social vulnerability and energy reliability, as well as wastewater discharge and superfunds sites.

Weather related disasters that have led to Federal Emergency declarations include fires, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Though much of the U.S. [has already experienced extreme heat events this summer](#), and despite being the number one weather-related cause of death in the U.S., heatwaves have never been the cause of a federal disaster declaration.

While these numbers seem bleak, there are actions that the U.S. can take to protect communities' lives and livelihoods. If you are an individual, you can contact your congressional representatives and ask for more pre-disaster resources. If you are a representative, you can work with other representatives whose constituents are also experiencing more and increasingly severe disasters. Together, we can advocate for stronger, resilient infrastructure by:

- **Shifting** post-disaster federal dollars to pre-disaster funding so communities can invest in infrastructure before they suffer.
- **Creating** new sources of dedicated funding, through state voter referendums, surcharges on certain types of insurance coverage, and state-level superfund laws.
- **Mandating** that U.S. insurance companies take into account mitigation measures when pricing insurance policies, which would incentivize policyholders to take actions such as wet-proofing ground floors, raising mechanical systems, and taking other steps to mitigate disaster risks that will save all taxpayers money--just as FEMA does with the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System.
- **Creating** better infrastructure that is built to withstand climate events for its lifespan and is designed to address both physical and social vulnerabilities.
- **Amending** the Stafford Act to ensure that heat waves are treated the same as other federal disasters and deploying resources to communities that have been suffering, and will suffer more as the planet gets hotter.

To build the analysis, Rebuild by Design brought on the expertise of [APTIM](#) and [iParametrics](#). Similar research by Rebuild by Design convinced policyholders to create the \$4.2 billion New York State Environmental Bond Act of 2020, which was overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2022.

“The data shows that communities across the U.S. are impacted, and we need a nationwide strategy to promote investment. Communities throughout the U.S. can take actions that lower their risk at the same time that it saves money in the long run.” **said Jeff Stevens, CEM, MEP, Executive Vice President and General Manager at iParametrics.**

The Atlas of Accountability builds on Rebuild by Design's 2022 report, "[Atlas of Disaster](#)," which takes a look at county-level disaster declarations, post disaster federal assistance, social vulnerability, and energy reliability for the years 2011-2021. The report provides an overview of the challenges embedded in current U.S. federal disaster policy and provides a roadmap for states to develop sustainable, state-level resilient infrastructure projects in collaboration with the most physically and socially vulnerable communities.
