

REBUILD BY DESIGN

For more information

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***** Virtual Press Briefing on the *Atlas of Disaster: Kentucky* *****

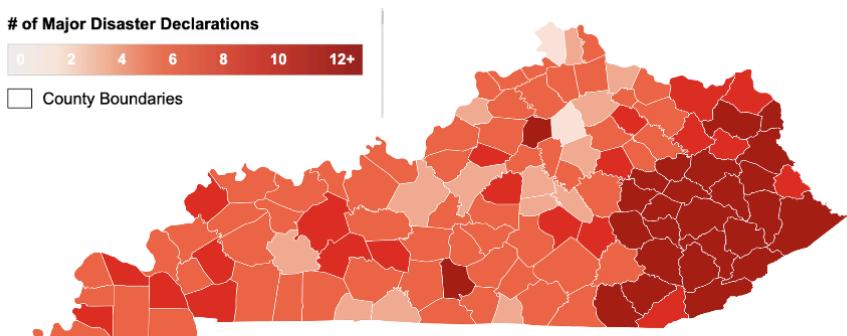
Friday, May 23rd at 11am, Register [HERE](#)

PRESS RELEASE

FRANKLIN AND JOHNSON COUNTY, KY WITH 16 EXTREME WEATHER DISASTERS, RANK FOURTH IN NATION FOR HIGHEST NUMBER OF FEDERALLY DECLARED MAJOR DISASTERS: Five Kentucky counties rank in the top ten of all U.S. counties.

May 19, 2025 | On the heels of major devastation and loss of life in Kentucky, [Rebuild by Design](#) releases the [Atlas of Disaster: Kentucky](#), a report on Kentucky's recent history of disasters and opportunities to build storm resilience.

The analysis finds that Kentucky has encountered **23 federally declared disasters** between 2011 and 2024 (see below). This ranks Kentucky as tied for **5th for frequency of disaster declarations**—five of the top ten counties for disaster declarations nationwide are located in Kentucky.



*(Image) Between 2011-2024, KY faced 23 federally declared disasters, with Franklin and Johnson Counties having the highest disaster counts in the state (16 each).
Read the report to see experiences for individual counties.*

"Since January, 47 people have lost their lives in Kentucky. How much more suffering has to happen before action is taken?" **said Amy Chester, Director of Rebuild by Design.** "States

across the country are developing new funding sources to support resilience infrastructure. Kentucky must be next."

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATIONS (2011-2024)			
RANKING	STATE	NUMBER OF MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS	REPRESENTATIVE
1	California	39*	
Tied for 2	Oklahoma	30	
Tied for 2	Tennessee	30	
3	Iowa	26	
Tied for 4	Vermont	25	
Tied for 4	Alaska	25	
Tied for 4	Mississippi	25	
Tied for 5	New York	23	
Tied for 5	West Virginia	23	
Tied for 5	Kentucky	23	
*In events where tribal land is affected, federal disaster declarations may count the same event twice.			

COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (2011-2024)			
RANKING	COUNTY NAME	NUMBER OF MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS	REPRESENTATIVE
1	Washington, VT	22	Becca Balint (D) *
2	Merrimack, NH	19	Chris Pappas (D)
3	Lamoille, VT	17	Becca Balint (D) *
Tied for 4	Franklin, KY	16	James Comer (R)
Tied for 4	Johnson, KY	16	Harold Rogers (R)
Tied for 4	Essex, VT	16	Becca Balint (D) *
Tied for 4	Orleans, VT	16	Becca Balint (D) *
Tied for 8	Clay, KY	15	Harold Rogers (R)
Tied for 8	Lawrence, KY	15	Harold Rogers (R)
Tied for 8	Lee, KY	15	Harold Rogers (R)
	*at-large district		

Of the 23 disasters, 20 were flood-related, highlighting the state's acute and persistent flood risk. Counties with the highest number of declarations include Franklin and Johnson (16 each), followed closely by Lawrence, Magoffin, Clay, Lee, and Owsley (15 each).

While these numbers seem bleak, there are actions states can take to protect communities' lives and livelihoods. Rebuild by Design calls for new, long-term, funding sources for climate adaptation such as upgrades to sewer infrastructure, raising roads, helping communities move from high risk areas and in place using the land to create green buffers to reduce risk, and premature death from extreme weather events.

Recommendations include:

- Creating new sources of dedicated funding, through state voter referendums and surcharges on certain types of insurance coverage.
- 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 the ground floors, raising mechanical systems, and taking other steps to mitigate disaster risks -- as FEMA does with the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System.
- Creating better infrastructure that is built to withstand extreme weather events for its lifespan and is designed to address both physical and social vulnerabilities.

If you are unable to join us this Friday, but would like to be briefed on the report, please reach out to media@rebuildbydesign.org

Rebuild by Design is housed at the Institute for Public Knowledge at NYU and works with communities and local governments to co-design policies, projects, and programs to adapt to the worsening impacts of extreme weather.