

Community Resilience and Disaster Response

PREPARED TO CARE



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and the costs associated with disasters are increasing at alarming rates. According to the [National Centers for Environmental Information](#) (part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), there were, on average, 12.6 extreme weather events a year from 2014 to 2018, compared to 6.2 events for the broader timespan of 1980-2018. Over that 39-year period, the U.S. sustained 241 weather and climate disasters whose overall damages/costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion, for a total cost exceeding \$1.6 trillion. In 2018 alone, there were 14 extreme-weather and climate-disaster events across the U.S., with losses

“The principle of solidarity means that we stand together as God’s creation. We are called to acknowledge this interdependence with other creatures and to act locally and globally on behalf of all creation. Furthermore, solidarity also asks us to stand with the victims of fire, floods, earthquakes, storms, and other natural disasters.”

ELCA Social Statement: “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice,” 1993

exceeding \$1 billion each.

Not only did

the disaster areas suffer significant economic effects, but 247 people died in these droughts, severe storms, tropical cyclones, wildfires and winter storms.

Tackling climate change and disasters is essential, but in light of these trends, part of our task is to build resilience. Resilience is an approach. As [Lutheran World Relief explains](#), “When we talk about resilience, we are describing the capacity of an individual, a

household or a community to absorb, adapt and potentially transform in the face of shocks and stressors that are triggered by a disrupting event,” which emphasizes the need to be resilient amid uncertainty.

Prepared by United Nations Climate Change, the short documentary "[Adapting to a Changing Climate](#)" highlights the growing recognition that we must adapt to climate change around the world.

Faith reflections

Many describe their religious faith as the foundation of their own and their family’s resilience. Increasingly, faith-based organizations are intentionally examining their role in the resilience of their communities. In the wake of natural disasters, this includes faith community vigilance to the role disaster aid may play in reflecting or increasing racial and economic disparities, and leadership to address inequities.

Mindful of the health and wellbeing of creation in a time of disasters intensified by climate change, this ELCA Advocacy resource series invites reflection on being #PreparedToCare.

Do you have a personal experience or impression that connects?

What are strengths of your congregation in this area?

How might you make a difference in your community?



Be part of the ELCA Advocacy network. Sign up for news and Action Alerts at impactful moments from elca.org/advocacy/signup.

To help low-income communities better withstand and recover from a continuum of disruptions, including extreme weather events, Lutheran Services in America takes part in a [community resilience-building program](#). Many organizations in this network provide services and programs that can be enhanced to help people and communities survive, rebuild and rebound more quickly from adverse shocks and stresses such as floods, fires, hurricanes and tornadoes.

Through Lutheran Disaster Response, the ELCA brings God’s hope, healing and renewal to those whose lives have been disrupted by disasters, in the U.S. and around the world. LDR is rooted in community relationships, accompanying a community from immediate relief through long-term recovery. Its work, from risk reduction to emotional and spiritual care, follows Christ’s call to bring hope and healing to our neighbor in need. LDR offers congregations a [toolkit](#) to help them prepare for disasters, increasing their capacity to face contemporary challenges with resilience.

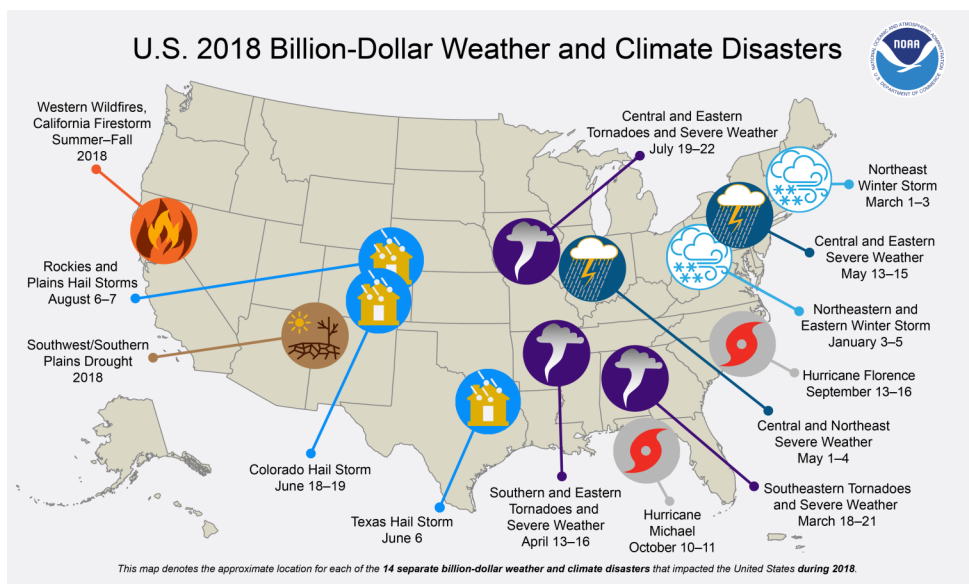
Vital support

Resiliency must be holistic, addressing individual personal necessities (coping and self-regulating mechanisms) and community-level requirements (establishing support networks) while incorporating the social and physical needs of all. The [U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit](#) and

introductory video from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration can help congregations, individuals and communities assess these considerations.

After the president of the United States declares a major disaster for a geographical region, federal assistance may be available to those located in that area. Funding these services helps communities expand their capacity for resilience as they cope with, grow through and transcend adversity.

- ⇒ **LEGISLATIVE FOUNDATION:** The [Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018](#) acknowledges the shared responsibility among Congress, the administration and state and local partners for disaster response and recovery, aims to reduce the complexity of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and builds the nation’s capacity for the next catastrophic event.
- ⇒ **PROPERTY CONCERNS:** The U.S. Small Business Administration offers [disaster loan assistance](#) to homeowners, renters, private nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses of all sizes. Low-interest, long-term disaster loans can be used to repair or replace uninsured or underinsured property damaged in disasters. Churches may also turn to this source. ([Church Law & Tax](#), February 2018).
- ⇒ **FARM CONCERNS:** The [federal crop insurance program](#) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is designed to provide a robust and reliable farm safety net, regardless of the size and scope of weather disasters.
- ⇒ **CONCERNS ABOUT OLDER AMERICANS:** Valuable safety information for older Americans in times of disaster has been compiled in various resources from the [Administration for Community Living](#), part of the Department of Health and Human Services, and in "[Emergency Preparedness Manual for the Aging Network](#)," developed by the Department of Homeland Security.



Source: [ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/](https://www.ncep.noaa.gov/billions/)

PRAYER FOR RECOVERY AFTER DISASTER

“Your word of peace stills the storms that rage in our world. Bring hope to places that know devastation in the calm after the storm. Bring comfort to those who grieve the loss of loved ones and property. Let your love be known through those who work to bring order in the chaos. Help us to shoulder the burden of suffering and make us bearers of the hope that can be found in you. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

Evangelical Lutheran Worship:
Occasional Services for the Assembly,
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