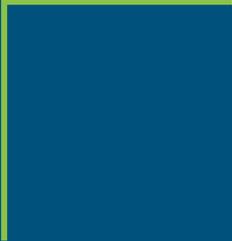


Welcome!



Agenda:

- 1. Welcome and Opening**
- 2. Speakers:**
 - 2.1. Emma Kelly, Appalachian Voices
 - 2.2. Kevin Zedack, Appalachian Voices
 - 2.3. Genevieve Guerry, Wetlands Watch
- 3. Q&A**



Why are we here today?





What is FEMA, and how
does it respond during a
disaster?

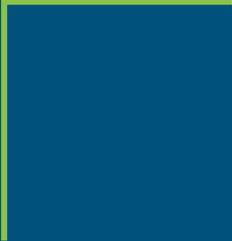


The Origins of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- President Nixon signed the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, which established the process for presidential disaster declarations.
- President Jimmy Carter established the Federal Emergency Management Agency was created in 1979 by Executive Order
- Congress expanded FEMA's authorities with the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1988, which amended and renamed the Disaster Relief Act of 1974 as the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act).
- FEMA was moved into the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, when President George W. Bush signed the Homeland Security Act.

What does FEMA do?

- FEMA provides training and educational opportunities to emergency managers, community organizations, and local governments.
- It provides assistance to disaster survivors, local and state governments, and nonprofits that provide essential services.
- It deploys search and rescue teams and can support state-led disaster recovery centers.
- It offers grants to state and local governments to mitigate the risk of future disasters.
- It manages the National Flood Insurance Program.



What is the FEMA Review Council?



Creation of the FEMA Review Council:

- On January 24, 2025, President Trump established the FEMA Review Council through [Executive Order 14180](#).
- Its goal is to advise the President on "the existing ability of FEMA to capably and impartially address disasters occurring within the United States and shall advise the President on all recommended changes related to FEMA to best serve the national interest." ([DHS webpage](#))
- [In November](#) it is going to submit a final report with recommendations to President Trump.

What has the Administration Said?

- [NBC, January 24th](#): "I'll also be signing an executive order to begin the process of fundamentally reforming and overhauling FEMA, or maybe getting rid of FEMA. I think, frankly, FEMA is not good,' Trump said at a hurricane recovery briefing in Fletcher, North Carolina."
- [NPR, June 26th](#): "At the first meeting of the FEMA Review Council, the council's co-chair, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, said, 'The president and I have had many, many discussions about this agency. I want to be very clear. The President wants it eliminated as it currently exists. He wants a new agency.'"

Governor Youngkin's Role

- Governor Glenn Youngkin serves on the council and is on a subcommittee that will report on how localities and other government agencies or departments outside of FEMA respond during disasters.
- “We will be receiving inputs from governors, from local leaders, from emergency response personnel, and, of course, from the review council itself,’ Youngkin said. ‘I think we will be able to chart a very clear delineation of the way things work today,’ Youngkin added, noting the ‘deep challenges’ of FEMA’s current system and the group’s goal to ‘shift responsibility to the states and therefore move FEMA from being a supplant role into a support role.” ([Virginia Mercury, July 10](#))

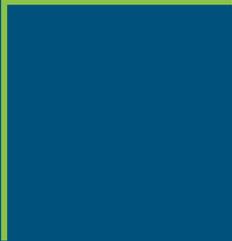
Federal vs. Local Funding

Local Emergency Responders are the first line of defense.

- "During a disaster, FEMA's assistance can begin only after a state requests an emergency declaration and the U.S. president approves it. The request has to show that the disaster is so severe that the state can't handle the response on its own." (Smart Cities Dive, 6/2025)
 - The Stafford Act

Federal Funding supports Local Emergency Management.

- DOE's Argonne National Laboratory (7/25): "Emergency Management Performance Grants from FEMA is keeping many local organizations afloat, especially in smaller counties. 'Without the current use of EMPG, I would have to close my doors. It literally helps me keep the lights on,' one director told researchers. Without these grants, 'we would no longer be able to stay open.'"



What is happening to
FEMA right now?



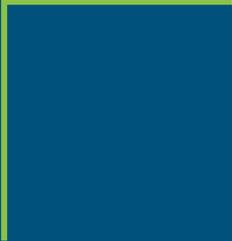
Current Situation

Staffing Levels

- **Government Accountability Office, 2023**: FEMA has had trouble building a workforce.... It has fallen short of its yearly staffing target since 2019—and that gap continues to grow.
- **CNN, April 2025**: About 20% of FEMA's permanent full-time staff – roughly 1,000 workers – are expected to take a voluntary buyout.
- **WaPo, Aug. 2025**: FEMA had already lost about 2,000 people in recent months ... DHS transferred more than 100 people to ICE — half of FEMA's human resources department and about 50 people from its security team.

Funding Concerns

- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program Cancellation**:
- Created in 2018 during the first Trump presidency.
- The funding has been used for evacuation shelters, flood walls and improvements to roads and bridges, among other projects.
- Since 2021, \$4.5 billion in funding for nearly 2,000 projects, came from BRIC.
 - In July, 20 states **sued** in response. In August, a federal judge **ordered** that the government not cancel and redistribute BRIC funds yet



Now, our panelists!

