

January 28, 2015

FEMA DRF Major Disaster Assistance: Pennsylvania

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. Additionally, 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. Pennsylvania is part of Region III, headquartered in Philadelphia, PA.

Major Disaster Declarations: FY2000-FY2013

A total of 14 major disaster declarations were made in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania between FY2000 and FY2013. During that time, there were also two requests for major disaster declarations that were denied. The approved declarations led to \$1.0 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 nearly \$500 million obligated in FY2011 alone. **Figure 1** displays the total funding obligated to Pennsylvania each year. The highest number of declarations in one year occurred in FY2004 and FY2011, each of which had three declarations.

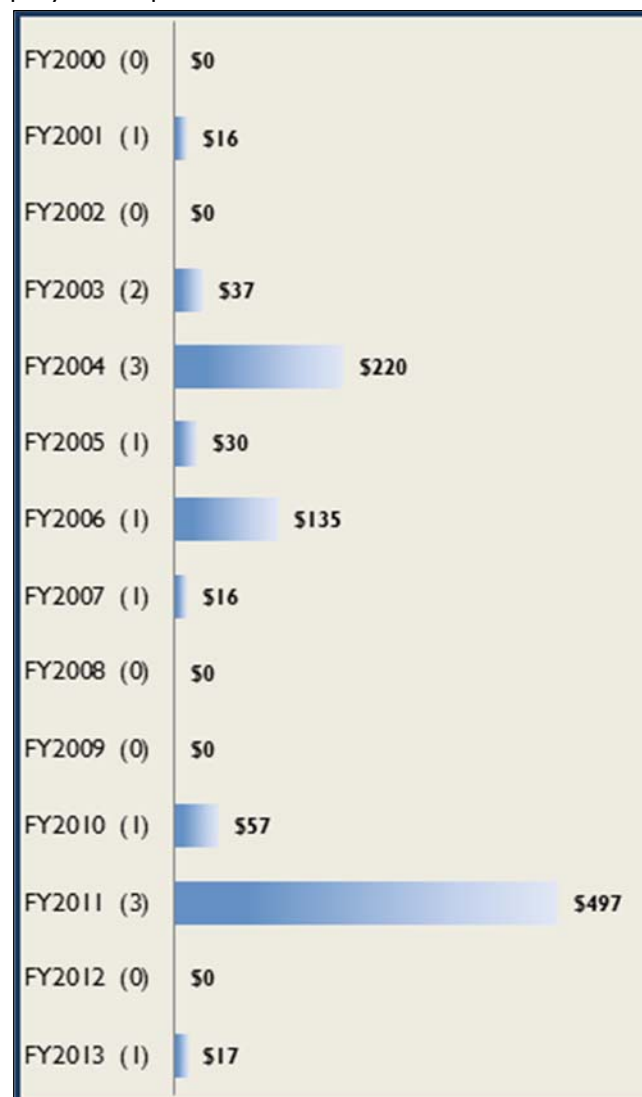
Significant Incidents

The most significant incident in Pennsylvania was Tropical Storm Lee, which occurred in FY2011. This incident led to nearly \$374 million in federal funding from the DRF.

Other major incidents include Tropical Depression Ivan in FY2004, severe storms in FY2006, and Hurricane Irene in FY2011. Pennsylvania also received assistance as a result of Hurricane Sandy in FY2013.

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

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



Source: CRS analysis of FEMA DRF obligations data as of June 2014.

Notes: Figures above reflect both actual obligations and projected obligations. Only obligations from the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund are included. Please consult the "Additional Resources" section for information on other federal assistance programs.

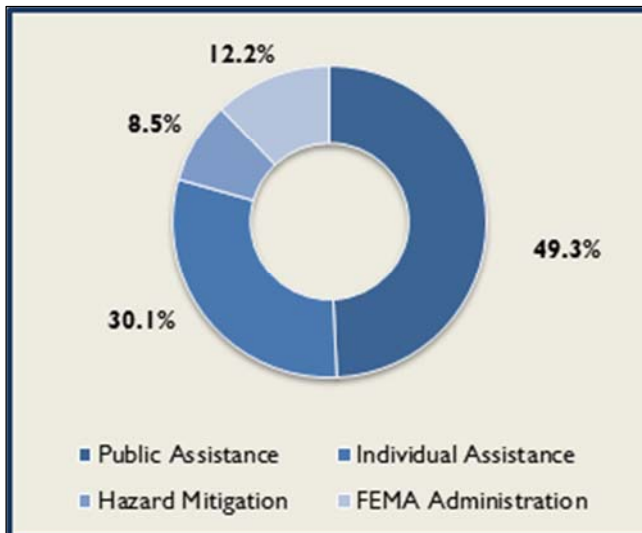
Types of Assistance Provided for Major Disasters

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

- Public Assistance (PA) that is used to conduct debris removal operations, repair or replace damaged public infrastructure, and other assistance;
- Individual Assistance (IA) that provides direct aid to impacted households, and other assistance;
- Hazard Mitigation (HM) that funds resilience projects and programs, typically across the whole state; and
- FEMA administrative costs associated with each disaster declaration.

The decision to provide certain types of assistance is made at the time of the major disaster declaration. For many major disasters, all of the assistance types outlined above will be authorized. For others, some assistance types will not be included. **Figure 2** compares the amounts expended for different types of assistance that were provided to Pennsylvania from FY2000 to FY2013.

Figure 2. DRF Assistance for Pennsylvania, by Type (FY2000-FY2013)



Source: CRS analysis of FEMA DRF obligation data as of June 2014.

County Impact

Since 2000, 67 localities in Pennsylvania have received aid under a major disaster declaration. Wyoming County has received assistance for major disasters 10 times across this period, which is the highest number in the state.

Other Assistance Funded Through the DRF

In addition to the major disasters listed above, there are also other forms of assistance that are funded through the Disaster Relief Fund. These include both Emergency Declarations and Fire Management Assistance Grants. The assistance provided for these declarations typically involves 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 and are issued to assist state, local, and tribal efforts prior to the 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 federal emergency management policy. 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 RL34146, *FEMA's Disaster Declaration Process: A Primer*
- CRS Report R42845, *Federal Emergency Management: A Brief Introduction*
- CRS Report R43537, *FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund: Overview and Selected Issues*
- CRS Report RL33053, *Federal Stafford Act Disaster Assistance: Presidential Declarations, Eligible Activities, and Funding*

FEMA is also responsible for administering the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). More information on whether your community participates in this program can be found in the NFIP Community Status Book at fema.gov.

CRS Experts

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