



How Federal Changes Could Impact New York City's Disaster Prevention, Response, and Recovery

IBO's *Federal Changes, Local Impacts* series is a collection of short reports that examine areas of New York City's budget, economy, and operations that are particularly reliant on federal funding, subject to notable federal policy changes, or both. These reports are intended to inform public discussion by objectively highlighting how federal decisions may affect the City. IBO encourages readers to visit its [website](#) to explore additional topics covered in this series.

Since the One Big Beautiful Bill Act/H.R. 1 was enacted in July 2025, the Trump administration has indicated that, beginning in September, it will refer to the measure as the "Working Families Tax Cut Act." In this report, IBO continues to use the bill's original name.

Introduction

New York City has faced a wide array of disasters that have required significant actions from all levels of governments. In the face of disasters such as the catastrophic flooding and damage from Hurricanes Sandy and Ida, or the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City government has been fully engaged in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. The federal government has consistently participated in these operations, with the City receiving billions of dollars of support over the past 25 years. Recent actions by the Trump administration, however, have thrown into question what had historically been viewed as a stable pillar of federal funding. These actions to cut resources or shift the burden to states and localities come at a time when the [NYS Comptroller's Office has found](#) that weather-related natural disasters are becoming more severe, and more costly.

Main City Agencies Working in Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

New York City's emergency response agencies include New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM), New York Police Department (NYPD), the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) and others which receive smaller levels of federal support. These agencies conduct emergency preparedness and outreach efforts for their staff, community-based organizations, and individuals to ensure New York City is prepared to respond to a variety of emergencies—structural fires, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and chemical or biological

FIGURE 1

2025 Budgeted Agency Staffing Levels

	2025 Civilian Headcount	2025 Uniformed Headcount	Total Headcount	2025 Non- City Funded Headcount	Percent Non- City Funded
NYPD	14,319	35,025	49,344	298	0.6%
FDNY	6,291	10,952	17,243	114	0.7%
NYCEM	241	-	241	148	61.4%

SOURCE: Mayor's Office of Management and Budget-June 2025

New York City Independent Budget Office

spills, among others. NYCEM is the primary agency responsible for developing educational resources to New Yorkers on how to prepare for, how to stay safe during, and what to do after emergencies. Figure 1 shows that fiscal year 2025 budgeted uniformed and civilian staffing levels for the Police and Fire departments are almost fully City-funded, but budgeted positions for NYCEM are majority non-City funded.

NYCEM generally takes lead in coordinating cross-agency efforts. The scale of damage from Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and Ida in 2021, and the COVID-19 pandemic onset in 2020, highlighted the importance of cross-agency and flexible emergency preparedness. [Hurricane Sandy](#) caused 52 injury-related deaths and more than 2 million homes and facilities were without power, leading to widespread evacuations, while COVID-19 caused over [47,000 deaths](#) and required long shutdowns of most public places. Disaster events illuminate the City's need to train emergency response personnel to respond to emerging threats, establish emergency command and control structures, develop emergency management plans, and conduct other preparedness exercises. Such training allows emergency response agencies to better prepare the City's ability to combat natural and manmade disasters in the future. Together, these efforts help prevent loss of property and life.

Most of NYCEM's key metrics related to disaster preparedness are [trending in the right direction](#), with more exercises being conducted among agencies and community groups, and more subscribers to the City's disaster notification systems. Additionally, NYPD's metric for disaster preparedness—which tracks hours of counterterrorism training for its staff—has also been trending upward, though it sharply dropped in 2025.

Federal Funding for Disasters and Emergency Response

Regularly recurring federal funding from the Department of Homeland Security makes up a modest portion of NYPD and FDNY's budget, but composed nearly 30% of NYCEM's budget in 2025 (see Figure 2).

Specifically, within NYPD, FDNY and NYCEM, federal disaster funding reaches New York City through a combination of ongoing grant funding and disaster-specific funding allocations. The three main areas are disaster:

- **Preparedness and prevention programs:** typically funded through recurring grant allocations that support disaster training exercises, stockpile supplies, and facilitate

FIGURE 2

Federal Department of Homeland Security
Funding By City Agency

Dollars in millions

	Department of Homeland Security Funding 2025	2025 Budget	Percent of Budget
NYPD	\$226.1	\$7,003.3	3%
FDNY	\$75.5	\$2,884.1	3%
NYCEM	\$37.9	\$129.9	29%

SOURCE: Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget-June 2025

New York City Independent Budget Office

coordination among first responders;

- **Response programs:** support the work of government, community-based organizations, and individuals in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, typically following a disaster declaration;
- **Recovery and mitigation programs:** support longer-term rebuilding efforts following a disaster, including the support of local populations who are

most impacted by the disaster, and mitigation of future hazards.

Together, these grants ensure that New York City is prepared for disasters before they occur and is continually building long-term resilience.

Federal Funding for Disasters

Federal funding for disaster-related programs, reflecting actual revenue that was received as of October 2025, totaled over half a billion dollars in City fiscal year 2025, and over \$16 billion over the past ten fiscal years. The funding generally flows through two federal agencies—the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Homeland Security (Homeland Security) with its sub-agency the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In addition, the City received another roughly \$13 billion as part of federal Treasury Department supports to help backfill loss of state and local tax revenue resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, Homeland Security accounted for most of the funds in 2025: \$503 million.

This report only focuses on the recurring grants and disaster declarations that have normally flowed through Homeland Security and HUD. Federal support for counterterrorism grew substantially following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and is intertwined with many aspects of NYPD’s more general operations. Federal funding for disasters flows as events occur to support disaster response and then in subsequent years for rebuild and recovery efforts. As part of the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government also provided funds to states and local governments to help backfill lost tax revenues; those funds are not discussed in this report. IBO focuses on the City’s disaster-related programs, the federal funds that support each of them, and the recent actions by the Trump administration that threaten this partnership.

Disaster Preparedness

The federal government funds programs that bolster state and local preparedness for a range of threats. These include:

FIGURE 3

Federal Disaster Preparedness Grant Revenue Received by New York City 2016-2025

Dollars in millions

Preparedness	2016-2025	Average
Department of Homeland Security	\$2,086.4	\$208.6
Urban Areas Security Initiative	\$1,390.6	\$139.1
Rail and Transit Security	\$102.0	\$10.2
Port Security Program	\$113.8	\$11.4
Other Grants	\$479.9	\$48.0

SOURCE: New York City Financial Management System
New York City Independent Budget Office

- Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) (\$133 million in 2025)
- Rail and Transit Security (\$10 million in 2025)
- Port Security Grant Program (\$8 million in 2025).

These programs support trainings and events for community groups, emergency management planning and exercises among city agencies and community groups, as well as maintenance of an emergency supplies stockpile. The stockpile includes more than a million liters of water, hundreds of ready-to-eat meals, personal protective

equipment, and basic consumable supplies, all of which require regular rotation. While the exact dollar amount varies from year to year, the City has received on average over \$200 million annually from the federal government for these programs since 2016. Figure 3 shows that through fiscal years 2016 through 2025, more than half of the funding has been for the Urban Areas Security Initiative, which provides funding to cities and metropolitan areas to assist with regional preparedness in case of terrorist attacks or disasters.

Disaster Response

In the event of a disaster, state governors can request financial support and other resources through the federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Federal assistance is largely managed under the Stafford Act, passed by Congress in 1988 as an amendment to the 1974 Disaster Relief Act. A state governor submits a request to FEMA for assistance, documenting their assessment of the extent of the damage and their needs. The president can then issue a disaster declaration, which makes the affected cities and states eligible for public assistance support under either an emergency or a major disaster declaration. FEMA staff are largely exempt from furloughs under the current shutdown of the federal government.

In recent years, New York City received FEMA disaster funding to respond to and recover from Superstorm Sandy, the COVID-19 pandemic, and flooding related to the remnants of Hurricane Ida. In the past ten years, the City has received \$8.5 billion in such disaster response funds, with nearly \$7 billion being tied to the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 4 shows disaster grant revenue to New York City across the past 10 fiscal years. The source and size of these grant funds vary year-to-year in relation to the timing and type of disaster the City is facing.

Support for emergency declarations, according to FEMA, includes funding to “save lives, protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe,” and specifies the types of assistance provided, such as debris removal or

FIGURE 4

Federal Disaster Response Grant Revenue Received By NYC 2016-2025

Dollars in millions

Response	2016-2025
Department of Homeland Security	\$8,000.5
FEMA COVID-19 Public Assistance	\$6,961.3
FEMA Asylum Support (Emergency Food and Shelter Program)	\$200.1
FEMA Sandy Response	\$119.3
Urban Search And Rescue Activations	\$49.0
Other Response Grants	\$670.7
Housing and Urban Development	\$516.4
Emergency Shelter Grants Program	\$516.4
Total	\$8,516.9

SOURCE: New York City Financial Management System

New York City Independent Budget Office

emergency protective measures to combat immediate threats to life or property. This can include fire and flood fighting measures, personal protective equipment, or short-term temporary shelter. Support for major disaster declarations is more extensive and includes support to local governments, institutions, and eligible individuals and households. Federal support comes with requirements that states and localities provide a funding match, usually ranging from 10% to 25% of total cost.

Response programs also include the provision of emergency shelter. In recent years, the City has also received \$200 million in grants from FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program to address the needs of a large influx of migrants.

The Trump administration rescinded this funding, as detailed later in this report. New York City can also receive FEMA reimbursement when its specialty first responders, such as the joint FDNY/NYPD Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team, assist other cities and states facing disasters. Last year New York City received roughly \$9 million for such activations.

Disaster Recovery

The City also has received extensive federal assistance for its recovery from disaster damage. Hurricane Sandy devastated shoreline communities and flooded the subway system. The City faced costs associated with reopening many aspects of its programs and services safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, including investments in ventilation and personal protective measures as it reopened public schools. In each case federal dollars have been instrumental in recovery efforts. Over the past ten years, the City has received over \$5.9 billion in recovery funds primarily through FEMA and HUD, with the majority related to Hurricanes Sandy and Ida.

HUD and FEMA programs typically focus on rebuilding housing and infrastructure with an eye towards creating more disaster-resilient communities. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, the City received over \$4.2 billion through the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR), of which over \$3 billion was directed to a housing recovery program. With this funding the City rebuilt single family homes (\$2.2 billion), multi-family housing (\$407 million), and public housing projects (\$317 million) damaged by Sandy. Unlike preparedness and response, recovery funds flow through both the City's expense and capital budgets to reconstruct public buildings and facilities.

FIGURE 5

Federal Disaster Recovery Grant Revenue Received By NYC 2016-2025

Recovery	2016-2025
Department of Homeland Security-General Fund	\$250.5
FEMA Sandy Recovery	\$113.5
FEMA Other	\$136.9
Housing and Urban Development-General Fund	\$3,368.0
Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery	\$3,357.8
Other Recovery Grants	\$10.2
Federal Sandy Recovery Grants-Capital Fund	\$2,248.2
FEMA & HUD Capital Funding	\$2,013.5
Other Federal Agency Recovery Grants (FTA, FHWA)	\$234.7
Total	\$5,866.7

SOURCE: New York City Financial Management System
New York City Independent Budget Office

Federal funds often help springboard large-scale infrastructure rebuilding projects as part of disaster recovery, with project rebuild designs specifically engineered to help mitigate disaster damage by future events. The East Side Coastal Resiliency project, a \$2 billion project raising and overhauling an entire city park, was started with an initial \$338 million in federal funding for the design.

Federal Actions to Reduce Disaster Funding

In January of 2025, President Trump created a Task Force to consider elimination of FEMA. The Trump administration has also placed federal disaster grants and programming such as UASI, FEMA Public Assistance, and other disaster recovery programs in a state of upheaval. Its proposed budget in May 2025 [recommended substantial cuts](#) to the FEMA Grant Programs and

the elimination of the federal Homeland Security Shelter and Services Program. In June [President Trump stated that FEMA would be eliminated](#) after hurricane season in North America. Additionally, the Trump administration and Homeland Security Secretary Noem have recommended the elimination of the UASI program, which has [received pushback from Governor Hochul](#). Furthermore, approximately [9% of the full-time staff at FEMA has left](#) from January to June 2025.

Legislatively, the continuing resolutions under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate affect various programs in different ways. As of October 2025, the current drafts include new language on disaster preparedness grants. This likely means that under a continuing resolution, the previously appropriated levels would continue. For the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), which funds FEMA response grants, language has been included in the House version of the continuing resolution to allow for FEMA to rapidly obligate funding in case of a disaster. Any potential cuts to preparedness grants will directly impact the City's ability to prevent and respond to large-scale emergencies, increasing the risks to both life and property in the event of a disaster.

Additionally, funds that have already been legally appropriated are also in question. In February 2025, the [Trump administration rescinded \\$80 million](#) that had been transmitted to the City through FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and then fired federal employees who had authorized disbursement of these funds. The City has

sued to seek the release of those funds, but as of October 2025, the case is still pending. This pattern continued in September 2025, when the federal government reported that it had [withheld \\$10.9 billion](#) in aid that had been allocated to states, mostly related to COVID-19 pandemic responses.

Conclusion

As a global coastal metropolis, New York City faces numerous natural and manmade disaster threats and occurrences. While no city wants to experience a disaster or major emergency, the federal government has previously strongly supported New York City's prevention, response and recovery actions. The Trump administration's threats to close federal agencies, cut funding, and reduce staffing threaten New York City's recovery from prior disasters and ability to respond in future disasters. Elsewhere in the United States, [localities responding](#) to natural disasters in summer of 2025 have been effectively told that they should not expect federal support, putting greater pressure on state and local governments to step into a role previously largely held by the federal government. The unparalleled scale of New York City's population and infrastructure makes these actions dangerous to a larger number of people and threatens ongoing recovery operations that would make New York City more resilient in the future.

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