



Report to the Washington State Legislature

Disaster Resilience Actions

**Washington Military Department
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For more information contact:

Anne-marie Marshall-Dody, Assistant Director for Disaster Resilience
Emergency Management Division

20 Aviation Drive

Camp Murray, WA 98430

anne-marie.marshall-dody@mil.wa.gov

(253) 512-7338

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Statutory Citation/Session Law for Required Report

The Washington Military Department submits the enclosed report to Office of the Governor and the House Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans Committee to fulfill the requirements of:

Section 3 of House Bill 1728 2023 Regular Session states:

”...Before July 1, 2025, the emergency management division of the state military department shall provide a report to the office of the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature on the overall progress of disaster resilience efforts for the hazards and issues where there is not another lead agency for coordinating resilience activities. Each agency with responsibility for resilience activities, including but not limited to the department of ecology, department of health, Washington technology solutions, department of agriculture, and department of commerce, is encouraged to include an update on its efforts and any associated policy recommendations as an appendix to the report.”

List of Contributors to Report

Anne-marie Marshall-Dody, CFM
Assistant Director for Disaster Resilience
anne-marie.marshall-dody@mil.wa.gov

Tim Cook, State Hazard Mitigation Officer
tim.cook@mil.wa.gov

Maximilian Dixon, Hazards and Outreach Program Manager
maxmillian.dixon@mil.wa.gov

Kevin Zerbe, Hazards Analysis and Resilience Planning Manager
kevin.zerbe@mil.wa.gov

Introduction

Washington residents have been increasingly impacted by disasters such as floods, landslides, wildfires, earthquakes, and pandemics, and they continue to be at risk from emergency threats and other disasters, with communities of color and vulnerable populations disproportionately impacted. Residents are also negatively impacted by certain responses to disasters, including border closures. In 2023, the state Legislature found it was critical to better prepare Washington for disasters and to mitigate the impacts with coordinated resilience strategies. The Legislature also determined that a resilient Washington increases the quality of life for Washingtonians – and that every one dollar spent on mitigation saves six dollars spent on recovery. To address these critical needs, the Legislature implemented a Disaster Resilience Unit (DRU) within the Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division, and enacted a new section in RCW 38.52. The new chapter laid out the Legislature’s expectations of what the new program should include:

(a) Methods for ensuring ongoing coordination of state and local disaster resilience and response activities, including:

- (i) Coordinating funding to maximize federal, state, local, and private investments;
- (ii) Serving as a public and private disaster resilience resource center;
- (iii) Enhancing interagency collaboration, education, and outreach programs; and
- (iv) Identifying and leveraging respective roles, authorities, and expertise of agencies.

(b) Strategies for addressing the impacts of all hazards, both natural and human-caused, such as border closures, including:

- (i) Developing, coordinating, and communicating disaster resilience initiatives and projects across state agencies and local governments on hazards and issues where there is not another lead agency for coordinating resilience activities, including projects that give special consideration to exclave communities;
- (ii) Conducting policy research and recommendations related to enhancing disaster resilience;
- (iii) Coordinating research, data collection, and analysis;
- (iv) Researching economic tools to address disaster resilience; and
- (v) Recommending investments to mitigate disaster risks from all threats and hazards.

(c) Participating and collaborating in interagency efforts to advance statewide climate resilience activities under chapter 70A.05 31 RCW, including collaborating on the development of a statewide strategy and identifying opportunities to leverage funding to advance solutions that improve the resilience of communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

This report documents the progress made to date by the state's Emergency Management Division in implementing HB 1728, provides steps in the coming years to continue building disaster resilience in the state, and provides recommendations. The report also includes summaries of actions by a sampling of partner agencies who all work to create a resilient Washington.

Progress of Disaster Resilience Efforts

The Disaster Resilience Unit (DRU) is designed to promote coordination among state, local, tribal, and private sector partners to enhance mitigation and recovery efforts for all types of hazards. From 2015 to 2024, Washington experienced 14 events that led to major disaster declarations, with numerous additional events that, while significant, did not meet that threshold. The program focuses on strengthening climate resilience and bolstering critical infrastructure, such as emergency services, transportation systems, water treatment facilities, and power grids. Its aim is to establish a unified, statewide approach to disaster mitigation and recovery through interagency collaboration, research, and strategic investment. Over the long term, the program seeks to support targeted local infrastructure improvements that increase community resilience and reduce reliance on federal aid for disaster recovery.

Program Overview

The DRU was established in February 2024. Over the past 14 months, the team has focused on strengthening interagency coordination, expanding its role as a statewide disaster resilience resource center, and increasing outreach across agencies and jurisdictions. Formed through a realignment of existing resources within the EMD, the DRU initially comprised the Hazards and Outreach Program (H&O) and Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program (HMA) sections. In August 2024, the Hazards and Resilience Planning (HARP) section was created. Bringing these three programs together under the DRU has enhanced overall program capacity, streamlined services, and enabled the development of a standardized risk reduction and mitigation cycle. This approach improves efficiency, supports the whole community, and extends technical assistance to previously underserved populations. By expanding local-level support and strengthening coordination across state, local, and tribal governments, the DRU is laying the groundwork for a more integrated, equitable, and forward-looking disaster resilience strategy, one that positions Washington to effectively leverage future funding opportunities.

Hazard Mitigation Assistance Section

The HMA helps Washington communities' access federal funding to reduce the impacts of future disasters. Most of this funding is provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and includes several key grant programs: the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and HMGP Post-Fire, Pre-Disaster Mitigation (now repurposed by FEMA for Congressionally Directed Spending), Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) and FMA Swift Current, and Building Resilient Infrastructure and

Communities (BRIC). These programs are administered by EMD's mitigation staff and overseen by the State Hazard Mitigation Officer.

To expand access to these funds, particularly for communities with limited capacity, a Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Specialist position was created in late 2024. This role focuses on providing technical assistance and supporting smaller jurisdictions in developing successful federal grant applications. The initiative has received strong positive feedback from communities across the state.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

The HMGP prioritizes reducing risks from earthquakes, floods, wildfires, tsunamis, and landslides, particularly for critical infrastructure and essential facilities. Currently, more than 164 active or pending HMGP grants support local risk-reduction projects and planning efforts across the state, representing approximately \$258.959 million in combined cost-share funding. While the program remains in place, automatic funding is no longer guaranteed under the current federal administration. As a result, the future reliability of HMGP as a consistent source of disaster mitigation funding remains uncertain.

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant Program (BRIC) – 2020-2023

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018, signed into law during President Trump's first term, established the BRIC program. BRIC was designed to strengthen community resilience against natural disasters—such as floods, tornadoes, and other increasingly frequent and severe weather events. Since its first funding round in 2020, BRIC has allocated more than \$5 billion nationally, playing a vital role in reducing disaster impacts and protecting vulnerable populations.

In April 2025, FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security released a series of memos describing intentions to cancel the BRIC program and withhold previously obligated grant funding. For Washington, BRIC had the potential to support projects totaling \$232 million, with approximately \$170 million, or 72 percent, of that funding directed toward small towns and rural communities. Washington's BRIC-funded projects included initiatives focused on tsunami preparedness, flood mitigation, building code improvements, climate resilience planning, and the development of microgrids. The uncertainty of the program's future jeopardizes roughly \$140 million in anticipated federal funds for these efforts.

In response, EMD is working closely with the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's Office to explore strategies for minimizing the impact on communities. To maintain Washington's eligibility and positioning for any future version of the program, the state submitted applications for the 2024 BRIC round, which had been announced in January 2025. Although the future of the appropriated federal funding remains uncertain, Washington has taken proactive steps to preserve its access to these critical resources.

Hazards and Outreach Section

The H&O Section focuses on education, public outreach, and resilience planning for three primary geological hazards: earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes. As of April 2025, the section has conducted or participated in more than 90 outreach events, more than 20 of which engaged tribal partners, reaching more than 59,000 people. The 2024 Great Washington ShakeOut saw record-breaking participation, with more than 1.59 million individuals registered and about 6 million reached through outreach efforts. In collaboration with the agency's Communications Division, the section also supported more than 75 media stories, extending public awareness further. In addition, more than 650 NOAA emergency radios and more than 400 tsunami evacuation route signs were distributed free of charge to high-risk local jurisdictions. Staffing for these positions is through a combination of federal and state funds. As of June 2025, funding for the tsunami program has been eliminated at the federal level. The loss of this critical funding will lead to the elimination of three staff and require reconsideration of how this important work can continue in the future without funding.

In 2024, EMD, the Department of Ecology, and the Office of the Insurance Commissioner launched #FloodAwarenessWeek. This initiative aimed to educate the public about flood risks, available mitigation programs, changing weather patterns, flood response actions, and insurance options.

To further support local risk-reduction, the section added two technical assistance positions focused on improving community outcomes following earthquakes, one dedicated to coastal areas and the other serving the entire state. These roles are supported by short-term funding through federal grants and state appropriations.

The Tsunami Vertical Evacuation Structure Project Manager supports coastal communities in planning and developing vertical evacuation structures to protect residents from tsunamis. Currently, Washington has only two complete structures out of an estimated need for 58 to 80. In 2024 and 2025, the program assisted two communities in finalizing proposals for such structures. However, with the potential cancellation of the BRIC program, which funds this position, the future of the role remains uncertain. The project manager is now working with communities to explore alternative planning and funding strategies.

The Functional Recovery Building Project Manager helps communities statewide identify buildings that are vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake, particularly unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings, which are typically pre-1945 brick structures lacking seismic bracing. This program includes the development of a user-friendly URM database to help prioritize buildings for seismic retrofitting. It also supports procedures that make it easier for communities to identify and survey URMs independently. The database is a collaborative effort involving the state Department of Commerce, the state Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and cities such as Seattle.

Additionally, the state Legislature has provided funding for a study focused on updating building codes and construction standards related to earthquake and tsunami resilience. This study, launched in late 2024 with funds from a prior fiscal year, will include recommendations to support the functional recovery of critical infrastructure and buildings after an earthquake. Washington is currently the only state actively pursuing functional recovery standards. A Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a consultant for the next phase of this work will be released in July 2025, and efforts are underway to secure funding for future phases of the project. Should the BRIC program be revived, EMD had been selected to for a \$1.37 million dollar grant for “Washington State Immediate Occupancy and Functional Recovery for Seismic Resilience.” If this grant is awarded, it will build on the study underway.

Hazard Analysis and Resilience Planning

The HARP program was established in 2024 within EMD’s Disaster Resilience Unit. HARP’s mission is to provide a data-driven, scientific foundation for decision-making that supports long-term disaster resilience in Washington. Its primary goal is to help EMD, state agencies, local governments, and Tribes better understand hazard risks and vulnerabilities—and to develop plans that reduce those risks over time. This includes expanding hazard mitigation and resilience planning across all jurisdictions.

By improving the quality of local and state resilience plans, such as hazard mitigation plans, HARP helps communities access federal funding and implement more effective risk reduction strategies. The program is working to expand its technical assistance offerings by hiring three additional staff to support local planning efforts.

One of HARP’s most important products is the State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SEHMP). Last updated in 2023, the SEHMP outlines a risk-informed strategy to address hazards across the state. Its FEMA approval ensures all state agencies are eligible for certain types of federal disaster recovery funding. As of January 2025, the SEHMP is linked to approximately \$1.5 billion in funding, including \$500 million for pre-disaster mitigation and \$1 billion for post-disaster recovery. A multi-agency Hazard Mitigation Working Group began meeting in 2025 to start discussions for the SEHMP’s next update, scheduled for 2028.

Agency Collaborations

Collaboration among agencies is essential to building a disaster-resilient Washington. Strong partnerships between EMD and state agencies such as the Department of Commerce’s Energy Division, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Office of the Insurance Commissioner are well established and continue to play a critical role. In 2024, expanding interagency collaboration became a priority, particularly through three key initiatives with the state Department of Ecology focused on flooding, coastal hazards, and climate resilience.

The DRU is a key partner in the Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT), a collaboration formed in 2024 between the Department of Ecology, Washington Sea Grant, and WSU Extension. COHORT supports coastal communities in addressing flooding and resilience challenges. As part of this effort, EMD received funding to hire a dedicated staff member to provide technical assistance for flood hazard mitigation grant applications, support local planning, and enhance outreach to underserved, high-risk communities. This staff member is part of EMD's Hazard Analysis and Resilience Planning section.

EMD contributed to the Washington State Climate Resiliency Strategy, published in September 2024. The strategy outlines key actions for EMD over the next four years, including:

- Launching a state-funded grant program to reduce wildfire risk in developed areas.
- Expanding staff capacity for climate-related hazard analysis, mitigation planning, and local support.
- Developing standardized hazard analysis methods in collaboration with partner agencies using Washington Geoportal 2.0.
- Working with partners such as the Department of Ecology to update policies, codes, and regulations to better address climate-related risks.
- Providing state funding to cover local cost-share requirements for small, rural, and tribal communities—improving access to federal grants and promoting equitable resilience statewide.

EMD remains an active leader in climate resilience and will build on this work by developing a comprehensive State Disaster Resilience Strategy in the coming years.

The DRU also partners with the Floodplains by Design (FbD) program, offering technical assistance to work groups statewide. These efforts include participating in technical sessions to share information about federal funding opportunities and hazard mitigation strategies.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Department of Ecology's Floods and Floodplain Planning Division and the DRU are launching a new collaboration funded with a Flood Mitigation Assistance Swift Current grant. This project aims to provide home buyouts, structure elevations, and other flood mitigation measures for flood prone properties insured under the National Flood Insurance Program. The project is set to begin in late 2025.

Challenges to Disaster Resilience in Washington 2025

Disaster resilience efforts in Washington, and across the nation, are facing significant challenges. For decades, federal agencies like FEMA and NOAA have provided vital support through infrastructure funding, disaster coordination, and financial assistance. Other federal programs have also played a key role, offering resources for technical

assistance to underserved communities, food security, scientific research, education, and public safety.

However, many of these programs have now been reduced or eliminated. This loss of federal support undermines the capacity built over years and threatens the state's ability to respond effectively to disasters at both the state and local levels. Without adequate federal funding, communities may have to rely more heavily on already stretched state and local resources, weakening overall disaster preparedness and response.

These challenges are further exacerbated by financial constraints at the state level. Washington is facing a projected \$16 billion budget deficit over the next four years. Gov. Ferguson and the state Legislature have made difficult funding decisions, prioritizing education, public safety, housing, ferry service improvements, and overall affordability for residents. Funding for DRU was reduced by half from previous years requiring the agency to conduct its first reduction in force. Without an increase in state funding to previous levels, the program will face further challenges and faces the possibility of being eliminated within two years.

Given these fiscal realities, it is essential to rethink how disaster resilience programs are delivered. As in past periods of economic hardship, adapting the approach will be necessary to maintain essential services and remain ready for future opportunities and needs.

Upcoming Work Plan

Beginning in July 2025, the DRU will focus on sustaining progress on current projects and programs while maximizing the use of existing staff and funding for as long as it can. The team will also begin planning for potential new or expanded disaster resilience initiatives, ensuring the state is well-positioned to take advantage of future funding opportunities. Key areas of work starting in 2025 include:

- Continue improving the level of customer service we provide to our communities. Collaborate with partner agencies working in the same space to establish consistent practices, ensuring that communities receive the same high-quality service, regardless of the agency.

Coordinating funding to maximize federal, state, local, and private investments

- Collaborate with partner state agencies, such as the Department of Ecology, to expand capital funding opportunities for large-scale flood damage reduction projects and initiatives such as implementation of the FMA Swift Current grant.
- Partner with agencies to develop a small grant program aimed at supporting coastal hazard resilience zones.

Researching economic tools to address disaster resilience

- Collaborate with the state's Emergency Management Council to identify alternative funding sources for response, recovery, and preparedness activities.

Serving as a public and private disaster resilience resource center

- Enhance access to resiliency information by collaborating with the state GIS coordinator and state agencies to develop a resilience geoportal, enabling a comprehensive view of geospatial relationships in resilience activities.
- Provide communities with vital risk assessment data by conducting ongoing evaluations of risk and resilience. This includes analyzing potential impacts on vulnerable populations (e.g., those affected by displacement, financial limitations, or location), performing gap analyses, and coordinating research to address deficiencies in hazard identification, mitigation, and implementation (e.g., lack of funding or policy).
- Develop an inventory of critical facilities, documenting their modernization history and identifying future needs.
- Produce and update hazard maps, including seismic hazard, tsunami inundation, current speed, and evacuation route maps, while prioritizing areas that require more detailed mapping.

Recommending investments to mitigate disaster risks from all threats and hazards

- Assess gaps and opportunities for coordinated, strategic investments, exploring potential partnerships beyond state agencies.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of resilience options to determine the most effective use of limited resources, helping decide whether to accept, mitigate, or transfer risk.
- Partner with the state Office of Insurance Commissioner to explore the feasibility of state-led insurance programs, similar to the California Earthquake Authority, for Washington. Also explore bringing other insurance programs to local communities to help mitigate the impacts of natural disasters.

Developing, coordinating, and communicating disaster resilience initiatives and projects across state agencies and local governments on hazards and issues where there is not another lead agency for coordinating resilience activities

- Collaborate with other state agencies to develop the SEHMP, ensuring that Washington and its communities remain eligible for disaster aid.
- Partner with state agencies to create a statewide Disaster Resilience Strategy that builds on the Washington State Climate Resiliency Strategy.
- In collaboration with Department of Ecology's Floodplains by Design and COHORT programs, create a statewide strategy for adaptation pathways to address long-term coastal risks. This will include reviewing research on managed retreat and climate mobility, identifying stakeholders, assessing at-risk infrastructure, drafting a policy

paper on the hazard scope and solutions, and forming a working group to develop the final report.

Conducting policy research and recommendations related to enhancing disaster resilience

- Identify at-risk buildings and share this information with communities. Study ways to improve building codes for safety, including assessing design standards, performance levels (e.g., collapse prevention), and identifying non-ductile concrete and unreinforced masonry buildings statewide.
- Study and assess the probabilities of natural hazards by collaborating with partner agencies, such as the Department of Ecology and Department of Natural Resources, on hydraulic modeling to better understand current and future flood risks, and the potential benefits and impacts of flood damage reduction projects.
- Collaborate with coastal communities to develop Tsunami Maritime Response and Mitigation Strategies for selected ports, harbors, and marinas. This includes conducting site-specific risk assessments and providing tailored mitigation recommendations.

Enhancing interagency collaboration, education, and outreach programs

- Continue to develop and collaborate with other state agencies on outreach programs such as #FloodAwareness Week.

Key Recommendations

1. Strengthen state investment in hazard mitigation and resilient infrastructure.

Increase state funding for critical hazard mitigation projects, including seismic retrofitting, flood protection, and tsunami vertical evacuation structures. Prioritize infrastructure improvements in high-risk areas such as coastal and at-risk communities, and ensure resources are available for both pre-disaster planning and post-disaster rebuilding.

2. Expand resilience planning and technical assistance

Support local governments, schools, and underserved communities with technical assistance to develop hazard mitigation plans and navigate federal funding processes. Increase state funding to backfill positions lost to federal cuts and look for ways to fund additional staff to improve risk assessments, planning capacity, and community-level implementation of resilience strategies.

3. Enhance public education, outreach, and equity

Secure stable state funding for hazard education and outreach programs that currently rely on federal grants. Focus efforts on reaching vulnerable populations, disadvantaged rural

communities, and tribes with accessible information on natural hazards and preparedness.

4. Build coastal and maritime resilience

Develop and implement adaptation pathways for long-term coastal risk management, including sea level rise and storm surge. Support port and harbor mitigation strategies, coastal flood modeling, and managed retreat planning. Invest in infrastructure and policies that ensure long-term viability of coastal communities.

5. Improve data integration and decision-making tools

Create a statewide resilience geoportal to centralize geospatial data and risk information. Expand hazard mapping, infrastructure inventories, and research on unreinforced masonry and other vulnerable structures. Use this data to guide strategic investments and policy decisions.

6. Advance a statewide disaster resilience strategy

Develop a comprehensive, state-led disaster resilience strategy that builds on the SEHMP and climate resiliency strategy. Ensure alignment across agencies and funding streams and explore new funding mechanisms, including state-managed insurance programs, to improve Washington's long-term disaster preparedness and recovery.

Conclusion

Washington stands at a pivotal moment in its disaster resilience journey. As the frequency and severity of natural hazards—such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, and floods—increase, the need for coordinated, forward-looking resilience planning has never been more urgent. While federal support has historically played a vital role in hazard mitigation and emergency management, recent funding cuts and program eliminations, such as potentially the BRIC program and the National Tsunami Hazard Management Program, have placed greater pressure on state and local resources.

Through the establishment of the DRU and the development of new programs like HARP and expanded outreach initiatives, Washington has made significant progress toward building stronger, safer, and more informed communities. However, maintaining and accelerating this momentum will require sustained state investment, improved technical assistance for local jurisdictions, and better integration of scientific data into planning and infrastructure decisions.

By adopting the six recommended actions -- investing in hazard mitigation, expanding technical assistance, enhancing public outreach, building coastal resilience, improving risk data access, and creating a statewide resilience strategy -- Washington can lead the nation in proactive disaster resilience. These steps will ensure that our most vulnerable

communities are not left behind, our critical infrastructure is protected, and our state remains committed to facing future challenges with strength and unity.

Appendices

Washington State Department of Ecology

Shorelines and Coast Management Division

Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT)

The Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT) is a partnership with the Department of Ecology, Washington Sea Grant, and Washington State University Extension. Formed in 2023, COHORT funds staff at each agency to help provide technical assistance in their areas of expertise to coastal communities to tackle flooding and other coastal hazard resilience challenges. COHORT has carried out more than 320 engagement events and meetings with communities and Tribes across Washington. As part of this work, COHORT team has helped communities and Tribes apply for over \$150 million in federal funding for coastal hazards risk reduction projects. To date, \$85 million has been secured for 35 projects and an additional 17 projects totaling \$54 million are awaiting final funding decisions. Staffing for the COHORT for all four agencies was supported by \$1.2 million in funding from the legislature during the 2023-25 biennium. This means that for each \$1 the state invested in COHORT since 2023, the COHORT has brought in \$70 in federal funding for Washington communities and Tribes.

Floods and Floodplain Planning Division

Floodplains by Design

Floodplains by Design (FbD) is a network of Tribes, local governments, NGOs and communities advancing complex floodplain projects and an ambitious public-private partnership led by the Washington State Department of Ecology and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF). The program aims to accelerate integrated efforts to reduce flood risks and restore habitat along Washington's major river corridors. Its overarching goal is to protect local communities and preserve environmental health. In doing so, FbD supports key Washington values, including vibrant salmon runs, agriculture, clean water, safe homes and infrastructure and outdoor recreation. By fostering collaboration, the program aligns state and federal investments with locally driven solutions to address floodplain management challenges and promote a more resilient future.

FbD awards grants to eligible entities for collaborative, innovative projects across Washington. Since 2013, the program has distributed \$283.3 million in funding for local mitigation and capacity-building efforts. Ecology and BEF jointly lead the initiative, working to strengthen integrated floodplain management through funding, policy development, and best practices. This includes co-leading FbD action and advisory groups, supporting grant program implementation and communications, and advancing efforts in capacity building, knowledge sharing, increased funding, and productive policy development. As federal

funding priorities shift, Floodplains by Design will continue to play a vital role in mitigating flood hazards and supporting resilient communities statewide.

RiskMAP

The Department of Ecology administers the RiskMAP program in Washington to support floodplain management, monitor coastal erosion, and help communities prepare for flooding and sea level rise. They provide local communities with tools and expertise to better understand their natural disaster risks, with the goals of reducing loss of life and property and protecting the environmental functions and values of these landscapes.

Air and Climate Division

Climate Resilience Strategy

The Department of Ecology published the [Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy](#) in September 2024 at the direction of the Washington State Legislature ([RCW 70A.05](#)).

Developed in partnership with nine other state agencies, the strategy outlines actions they will take to help communities, infrastructure, and natural and working lands prepare for the impacts of climate change. The strategy focuses on the greatest climate risks facing Washington: reduced water availability, marine and coastal changes, flooding, extreme heat, and wildfires and smoke.

Our state agencies are working together to prepare and adapt to these changes, so we can reduce the harm caused by climate change and support healthier and safer communities. The strategy aligns the work of state agencies around shared goals. This helps our state deliver services more effectively and efficiently to Washingtonians.

- For communities, this means ensuring that Tribes, local governments, and other partners have the tools and resources they need to understand risks posed by climate change, prepare for these challenges, and adapt over time. This is especially true for people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts due to existing disparities like higher exposure to pollution, unstable housing and employment, and limited healthcare access.
- For infrastructure, this means publicly funded projects are planned, sited, and designed to withstand future conditions and be resilient to climate-driven impacts. This will ensure projects meet their expected lifespans, provide necessary services and benefits, and make responsible use of taxpayer investments.
- For natural and working lands, this means improving the health and function of ecosystems and habitats through restoration and supporting sectors like agriculture and forestry in adapting their practices to maintain viability in the face of a changing climate.

Actions are grouped under eight core strategies that address topics such as responding to climate-driven hazards and emergencies, ensuring state infrastructure can withstand future hazards, and reducing existing sources of pollution that exacerbate climate impacts.

Our state agencies will collaborate to continuously implement, evaluate and adapt the Climate Resilience Strategy, including establishing an ongoing forum to coordinate our work. State law requires Ecology and agency partners to update the strategy every four years to ensure it reflects the highest priority needs facing people and communities across the state. These updates will be informed by a monitoring and evaluation plan that tracks the capacity of agencies to carry out the work, the processes they follow, and the outcomes observed across Washington. Ongoing engagement with communities, Tribes, and other partners is an essential component of putting the strategy into action as well. Feedback and partnership are critical to helping refine and adjust our efforts. Progress reports are required every two years with the first due in September 2025. The first update of the strategy will take place in 2028.

Washington State Department of Commerce

Energy Division

The Washington State Department of Commerce, Energy Resilience & Emergency Management Office works to enhance energy resilience in the state's rural, remote, and historically underserved communities. Through the Energy Resilience Technical Assistance Program, the state provides practical, solution-oriented services that overcome barriers to achieving critical energy resilience goals. The program focuses on fostering long-term, trusted relationships within and between communities while addressing the unique challenges posed by the state's diverse hazards, including wildfires, flooding and extreme weather.

Between May 2023 and December 2024, the program supported more than 75 communities, facilitating progress on project valued at more than \$80 million. The program works to create tailored energy solutions and building local capacity for resilience. The energy resilience program is actively working to expand its efforts across all nine state regions and support regional energy resilience plans. The program is expanding to offer technical support for utility hazard planning, starting with wildfire prevention and coordination with essential community services during extreme weather and fire seasons.

Four key projects over the past 19 months include:

Skamania Fire District 6 (Skamania County): Supported the district's goal of creating a microgrid to power their off-grid firehouse, ensuring critical equipment remains operational during emergencies. Partnerships with Skamania PUD 1 and a local microgrid consultancy have laid the groundwork for technical feasibility and community well-being.

Point Roberts (Whatcom County): This isolated border community is developing a resilience hub to reduce reliance on foreign energy infrastructure. The program has facilitated strategic planning, grant applications, and educational events, resulting in \$133,000 for feasibility studies.

Lyle Fire Department (Klickitat County): Located in a wildfire-prone area, this disadvantaged community successfully secured \$712,910 for microgrid installation after revising its initial grant application with technical assistance support. The project enhances emergency response capabilities and energy autonomy.

Toppenish School District (Yakima County): Serving a vulnerable population, the district aims to create resilience hubs within local schools. The program has guided the district through multiple successful grant applications, securing over \$2.3 million in funding for microgrid installation and energy efficiency upgrades.

To build out the vision for the “Strengthening Washington: A Community Resilience Initiative,” the energy resilience program is applying key lessons learned over the past 19 months to better serve the communities of Washington State. Their focus is expanding technical assistance and planning support, including feasibility studies, site identification and on-site project support, and facility load testing. This approach has served as a model for technical assistance to communities in other state agencies such as Washington Emergency Management, Disaster Resilience Unit.

Washington State Department of Health

Executive Office of Resiliency and Health Security

Resilience: A Foundational Principle at the Washington State Department of Health

Resilience at the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is an operational commitment embedded within the department’s strategic priorities, programs, and partnerships. In an era marked by increasingly complex public health threats, environmental disasters, and health inequities, DOH works to enhance resilience efforts across four interconnected levels. DOH promotes *individual resilience* through the empowerment of mental, physical, and emotional well-being for employees and the broader community, recognizing that personal health is foundational to resilience. *Organizational resilience* efforts focus on developing the necessary infrastructure, culture, and systems within the governmental public health system to sustain response efforts and foster adaptive leadership. DOH strengthens *community resilience* by equipping local and Tribal health partners with the resources, funding, connections to partnerships, and collaboration needed to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. DOH supports statewide *system resilience* by prioritizing the modernization of health systems, enhancing data infrastructure, and coordinating interagency efforts to prepare for future public health challenges.

Wellness as Foundational to Resilience

DOH recognizes that holistic wellness, individual to systemic, is a foundational requirement for resilience capacity. Wellness is positioned as both a goal and a prerequisite for resilience: without access to health care, social connection, and community organizations that support individuals

and families, the people in our state are inherently more vulnerable to adverse events. Through priority initiatives such as the Birth Equity Project, Care-A-Van, and School-Based Health Centers, the department advances physical and mental health as essential community resilience-building tools. By empowering health and wellness, individual and community capacity to bounce back and build forward is significantly strengthened.

Empowering Environmental Health and Wellness

Promoting and integrating environmental justice into services and evaluation is an increasingly urgent public health priority. Washington faces compounding threats from wildfires, extreme heat, water insecurity, and air pollution, all of which disproportionately impact vulnerable populations. DOH's Environmental Health Disparities Map, ongoing HEAL Act implementation efforts, and Climate and Health Adaptation Initiative form the backbone of the agency's environmental resilience strategy. DOH also supports sustainable built environment design, climate mitigation efforts, and initiatives that reduce health risks and build climate change adaptive capacity.

Strengthening Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation

Emergency response and resilience is a high priority area for DOH as we look to ensure Washington communities are better positioned to prepare for, respond to, and recover from public health threats. To support this vision, the Department of Health focuses on strengthening several key capability areas of emergency response. These include supporting community-led solutions to reduce disaster risk, building a strong pipeline of deployable, emergency-ready professionals, and operating platforms such as WA HEALTH to coordinate critical logistics and data sharing during crises. Washington State Department of Health (DOH) fulfills its responsibilities as the coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8: public health, medical, and mortuary services. DOH also serves as a primary agency for ESF 3, 11, and 14, and as a supporting agency for ESF 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 15. As the state agency lead for ESF 8, the Department of Health plays a central role in ensuring statewide readiness through ongoing public health planning, training, exercises, and evaluation activities to ensure systems and responders are ready. DOH's prioritization of data modernization efforts and workforce development reflect a commitment to long-term adaptability and resilience. Agency commitments and initiatives include but are not limited to:

- DOH initiatives such as Power of Providers, 988 IT system implementation, and Care Connect advance the department's ability to respond to mental health crises, coordinate care, and reduce fragmentation across public health services.
- DOH is committed to advancing Tribal Data Sovereignty efforts, as evidenced by the historic January 2025 data sharing agreement between DOH and the Tulalip Tribe.
- DOH supports workforce development for internal response staff and external partners through a commitment to facilitating trainings and 32 exercises between 2025 and 2028 focused on a variety of topics including medical countermeasures, Chempack, mass fatality, burn surge, incident management team response, 2026 FIFA World Cup preparedness, and WA specific natural disasters.
- The Office of Resiliency and Health Security manages and maintains several hard-rostered Incident Management Teams which can be deployed to assist local health jurisdictions and Tribes virtually or in-person upon request.
- DOH's State Emergency Medical Reserve Corps uses the WAServ system to manage volunteers and deploy strike teams across the state.

- DOH employs and supports an Epidemiology Response Team, which includes a full-time State Disaster Epidemiologist with the goal of tracking and studying the short and long-term health impacts of disaster.
- The WA DOH Office of Communicable Disease Epidemiology is responsible for statewide surveillance and investigation of more than 60 notifiable conditions including foodborne and waterborne illness, vaccine preventable diseases, tuberculosis, COVID-19, influenza, and others. DOH maintains dashboards for wastewater data, respiratory illness, hospital bed tracking, and more to support preparedness and mitigation efforts.
- Between 2023-2024, DOH distributed 2,648 portable air cleaners at a cost of nearly \$1 million to high-risk areas across 18 local and regional health jurisdictions, 23 counties, and 5 Tribal Nations ahead of wildfire season.
- In the past three years, Washington State's Medical Countermeasures (MCM) Program helped protect public health by dispensing over 4.5 million COVID-19 vaccines, 220,000 COVID-19 therapeutics, and 10,000 mpox vaccines, showcasing its critical role in ensuring rapid, equitable access to life-saving interventions during health emergencies.

Emerging Public Health Threats

Resilience efforts at DOH extend beyond Washington's borders. Programs addressing threats like mpox, avian influenza, cybersecurity, and agricultural workforce health are guided by a whole systems approach that understands resilience to be a product of the connections between human, animal, and environmental health. Efforts such as wastewater surveillance epidemiology programs and antimicrobial resistance workgroups ensure that DOH is proactive in navigating emerging threats to the animal, human, and environment health matrix. Resilience at the Washington State Department of Health is the connection point that cohesively brings together the people, programs, and priorities of each office. Resilience is reflected in the way the Washington State Department of Health centers equity, prepares its workforce and communities for disaster or infectious disease outbreak, builds partnerships, grounds all actions and services in data, trust, and collaboration, and empowers the social determinants of health for all Washingtonians.

Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner

Washington state Insurance Commissioner Patty Kuderer considers financial resilience an important component in the state's overall resilience. The Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) actively reviews and approves policy language and rates to allow Washington residents peace of mind knowing legitimate and lawful insurance products are available for them. The OIC has supported legislation and drafted regulations to allow personal and commercial insurers the ability to provide up to \$7,500 a year to insureds for risk mitigation goods and services and not be in violation of the state's inducement and rebating laws. The OIC regularly travels to local fire districts, city council and county commissioner events to hold townhalls on risk and insurance. The legislature has asked the Insurance Commissioner and the Lands Commissioner to chair a work group to recommend a standard for property mitigation against wildfires. The OIC has a well-developed continuity of operations plan that includes signed agreements with other departments of insurance to guarantee Washington state residents have access to subject matter expertise to answer insurance related questions.

The OIC actively looks for opportunities to support EMD's disaster resilience efforts. Through collaboration with EMD, the OIC sent staff to disaster recovery centers in both the Gray and Oregon Road fires to support recovery efforts in 2023 and 2024. The OIC and EMD also signed interagency agreements to support the Washington Recovery Framework. At the request of EMD, the OIC regularly provides insurance related information to help better understand the financial impacts of Washington state hazards. With new authority provided to the Insurance Commissioner by the Legislature in 2024, the OIC is now prepared to issue post disaster data calls to insurers to better support EMD's recovery efforts.

Working with EMD and the Department of Ecology, the OIC is actively exploring pathways to increase awareness of flood risk. The cross-agency collaboration has led to social media campaigns involving a weeklong effort in the Fall of 2024. We expect *#flood awareness week* to continue and build upon last year's efforts. Also included in our collaboration are multiple research efforts looking into flood risk mapping and parametric insurance products to assist local government and state preparedness.

To increase EMD's and OIC 's ability to work together, the OIC sent a significant number of staff across multiple internal divisions to an EMD sponsored training in May 2025. We anticipate the collaboration between EMD and OIC to continue to be reliable partners as we build a more resilient Washington.