KEY INSIGHTS: THE STATE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Highlighting Data from NEMA's 2026 Biennial Report

Emergency management and homeland security are core functions of state government. States coordinate with local, tribal, territorial, federal, and private-sector partners to align resources and manage disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. These actions ensure the ability to manage complex disasters that cross boundaries and overwhelm local capacity.

STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUDGETS

State emergency management agency (EMA) budgets, appropriated by state legislatures, vary widely and are largely determined by a state's organizational structure, risk profile, population, and fiscal capacity. An analysis of state legislative appropriations to the EMA operational budget found that a state budget at the lower end of the operating budget appropriations scale in FY26 is estimated at **$390,000**, while the upper end is estimated at **$699 million (combined agency)**. Nationally, state funds appropriated for emergency management operations total an estimated **$1.8 billion**.

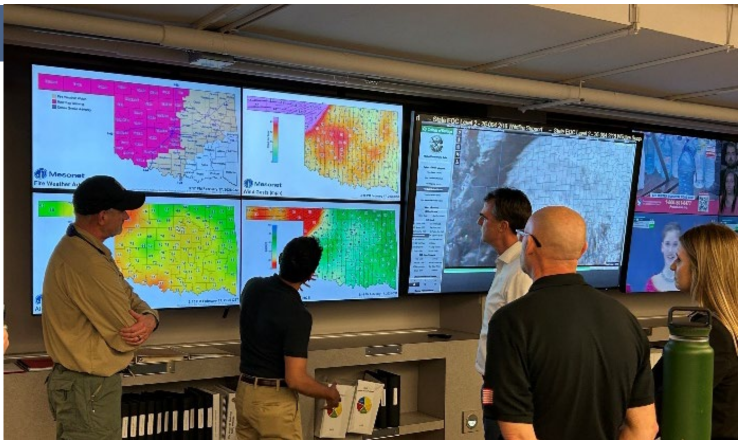
FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING FOR EMAs

States also rely on federal grant funding to support national priorities in emergency management and homeland security set by the federal government. The percentage of federal funding in the annual state EMA budget ranges from **zero to 98%**.

States' reliance on federal funding often proves an unstable strategy and requires addressing national priorities that may not reflect state priorities. From FY24 to FY26, **20 state EMAs** reduced their reliance on federal funding.

NATIONAL WORKFORCE

There are **8,613** total FTE positions dedicated to state emergency management and homeland security roles, but **1,245** of those positions are currently vacant. The average state emergency management agency is **168** FTE positions.



Reference: *NEMA 2026 Biennial Report*

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MUTUAL AID

EMAC. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is the national system of providing mutual aid between the states. The Compact has proven repeatedly to be scalable, efficient, and integrated into established incident command structures.

FY26 EMAC Stats:

- **24 states** maintain a dedicated fund to expedite payments to responders deploying for EMAC missions.
- **42 states** have statewide agreements allowing local government resources to deploy through EMAC.
- **29 states** have authority to deploy volunteer resources.
- **27 states** have authority to deploy private sector and/or non-governmental resources
- **20 states** can deploy tribal resources.

STATE DISASTER ASSISTANCE FUNDING

38 states maintain state-funded assistance programs. This underscores the principle that states are not solely administrators of federal disaster programs but are *active partners* across all levels of government.

- **28 states** run an in-state public assistance program.
- **15 states** manage an individual assistance program.
- **7 states** have an assistance program for unmet needs.
- **5 states** have a program dedicated to economic/business recovery.
- **13 states** have innovative assistance models that extend beyond the traditional categories.

WHEN FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED

The FEMA Public Assistance (PA) and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs (HGMP) both require the federal government to pay at least 75 percent of costs. The other 25 percent of the cost is the responsibility of the impacted community, known as the non-federal cost. Many states help communities share those costs.

- **35 states** share in the non-federal cost for PA.
- **26 states** share the non-federal cost for HMPG.

Reference: *NEMA 2026 Biennial Report*

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