

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3709

To direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit to Congress a report on preliminary damage assessments and make necessary improvements to processes in the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 4, 2021

Mr. KATKO (for himself and Mr. DELGADO) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit to Congress a report on preliminary damage assessments and make necessary improvements to processes in the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Preliminary Damage
5 Assessment Improvement Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Preliminary damage assessments play a
2 critical role in assessing and validating the impact
3 and magnitude of a disaster.

4 (2) Through the preliminary damage assess-
5 ment process, representatives from the Federal
6 Emergency Management Agency validate informa-
7 tion gathered by State and local officials that serves
8 as the basis for disaster assistance requests.

9 (3) Various factors can impact the duration of
10 a preliminary damage assessment and the cor-
11 responding submission of a major disaster request,
12 however, the average time between when a disaster
13 occurs, and the submission of a corresponding dis-
14 aster request has been found to be approximately
15 twenty days longer for flooding disasters.

16 (4) With communities across the country facing
17 increased instances of catastrophic flooding and
18 other extreme weather events, accurate and efficient
19 preliminary damage assessments have become criti-
20 cally important to the relief process for impacted
21 States and municipalities.

22 **SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the
24 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the
25 Federal Emergency Management Agency shall submit to

1 Congress a report describing the preliminary damage as-
2 sessment process, as supported by the Federal Emergency
3 Management Agency in the 5 years before the date of en-
4 actment of this Act.

5 (b) CONTENTS.—The report described in subsection
6 (a) shall contain the following:

7 (1) The process of the Federal Emergency
8 Management Agency for deploying personnel to sup-
9 port preliminary damage assessments.

10 (2) The number of Agency staff participating
11 on disaster assessment teams.

12 (3) The training and experience of such staff
13 described in paragraph (2).

14 (4) A calculation of the average amount of time
15 disaster assessment teams described in paragraph
16 (1) are deployed to a disaster area.

17 (5) The efforts of the Agency to maintain a
18 consistent liaison between the Agency and State,
19 local, tribal, and territorial officials within a disaster
20 area.

21 **SEC. 4. PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the
23 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the
24 Federal Emergency Management Agency shall convene an
25 advisory panel consisting of emergency management per-

1 sonnel employed by State, local, territorial, or tribal au-
2 thorities, and the representative organizations of such per-
3 sonnel to assist the Agency in improving critical compo-
4 nents of the preliminary damage assessment process.

5 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—This advisory panel shall
7 consist of at least 2 representatives from national
8 emergency management organizations and at least 1
9 representative from each of the 10 regions of the
10 Federal Emergency Management Agency, selected
11 from emergency management personnel employed by
12 State, local, territorial, or tribal authorities within
13 each region.

14 (2) INCLUSION ON PANEL.—To the furthest ex-
15 tent practicable, representation on the advisory
16 panel shall include emergency management per-
17 sonnel from both rural and urban jurisdictions.

18 (c) CONSIDERATIONS.—The advisory panel convened
19 under subsection (a) shall—

20 (1) consider—

21 (A) establishing a training regime to en-
22 sure preliminary damage assessments are con-
23 ducted and reviewed under consistent guide-
24 lines;

1 (B) utilizing a common technological plat-
2 form to integrate data collected by State and
3 local governments with data collected by the
4 Agency; and

5 (C) assessing instruction materials pro-
6 vided by the Agency for omissions of pertinent
7 information or language that conflicts with
8 other statutory requirements; and

9 (2) identify opportunities for streamlining the
10 consideration of preliminary damage assessments by
11 the Agency, including eliminating duplicative paper-
12 work requirements and ensuring consistent commu-
13 nication and decision making among Agency staff.

14 (d) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 18 months
15 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator
16 shall submit to Congress a report regarding the findings
17 of the advisory panel, steps that will be undertaken by the
18 Agency to implement the findings of the advisory panel,
19 and additional legislation that may be necessary to imple-
20 ment the findings of the advisory panel.

21 (e) RULEMAKING AND FINAL REPORT.—Not later
22 than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the
23 Administrator shall issue such regulations as are nec-
24 essary to implement the recommendations of the advisory
25 panel and submit to Congress a report discussing—

- 1 (1) the implementation of recommendations
2 from the advisory panel;
- 3 (2) the identification of any additional chal-
4 lenges to the preliminary damage assessment proc-
5 ess, including whether specific disasters result in
6 longer preliminary damage assessments; and
- 7 (3) any additional legislative recommendations
8 necessary to improve the preliminary damage assess-
9 ment process.

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