

# **VISUALIZING US NATURAL DISASTER DECLARATION – TRENDS AND PATTERNS**

## **Week 1 Documentation**

### **Data Cleaning in Power BI (Power Query)**

## Data Cleaning in Power BI

### 1. Introduction

Data cleaning is the foundational step in building reliable dashboards. In Week 1, the FEMA Disaster Declarations dataset was imported into Power BI and transformed using **Power Query**. The goal was to ensure consistency, remove duplicates, and prepare the dataset for accurate visualization and analysis.

### 2. Step-by-Step Procedure

#### 2.1 Importing Data

- **Source:** FEMA Disaster Declarations dataset (CSV/Excel format).

One can download the dataset from

<https://www.fema.gov/openfema-data-page/fema-web-disaster-declarations-v1>

- **Process:**
  - Open Power BI Desktop → Home → Get Data.
  - Select the file format (CSV/Excel).
  - Load the dataset into Power Query Editor

#### 2.2 Removing Unnecessary Columns

- **To Do:** Identify columns not required for analysis (e.g., metadata, unused codes).
- **Procedure:**
  - Right-click column → *Remove*.
  - Document removed fields in a log for reproducibility.
- **Result:** Removed the following columns
  - stateCode
  - disasterPageUrl
  - shapefileUrl
  - kmzfileUrl
  - geoJsonUrl
  - id
  - hash
  - lastRefresh

#### 2.3 Checking Data Types

- **To Do:** Verify that each column in the FEMA dataset has the correct data type assigned.

- **Procedure:**
  - Use Power Query Editor to review column type icons (ABC = Text, 123 = Number, Calendar = Date).
  - Change types where necessary:
    - disasterNumber → Whole Number
    - declarationDate, incidentBeginDate, incidentEndDate, entryDate, closeoutDate, updateDate → Date
    - stateName, declarationType, incidentType, disasterName, designatedIncidentTypes → Text
    - iaProgramDeclared, ihProgramDeclared, paProgramDeclared, hmProgramDeclared → Boolean (True/False)
- **Outcome:** Ensures consistency in calculations, prevents errors in aggregations, and supports accurate visualizations.

## 2.4 Handling Missing Values

- **To Do:** Check for null values across key fields.
- **Procedure:**
  - Use *Transform* → *Replace Values* for categorical fields.
  - For dates, apply conditional logic:
    - If incidentEndDate is missing, replace with declarationDate as proxy.
    - If stateName is missing, mark as “Unknown”.
  - *The closeOutDate field contained numerous null values, which indicate disasters that are still ongoing. To ensure accuracy, these null values are retained. For visualization purposes, a conditional column was added to categorize records as either ‘Closed’ (with a valid date) or ‘Open’ (null values).*
- **Outcome:** Ensures no blank values exists.

## 2.5 Creating Derived Columns

- **Fiscal Year (fyDeclared):**
  - Formula:
 

```
if ( Date.Month([ declarationDate ]) >= 10
then ( Date.Year([ declarationDate ]) + 1)
else ( Date.Year([ declarationDate ]) )
```

adjusted for fiscal cutoff (Oct–Sep).

- **Incident Duration:**
  - Formula: `Duration.Days([incidentEndDate] - [incidentBeginDate])`.
- **Status:**
  - Formula: If `[closeoutDate]` is null → "Open", else "Closed".

## 2.6 Remove duplicates

- **To Do:** Remove duplicate rows.
- **Procedure:**
  - *Home → Remove Rows drop-down → Remove Duplicates.*
- **Outcome:** Prevents double counting in dashboards.

## 2.7 Load Cleaned Data

- **To Do:** Close & Apply changes.
- **Procedure:**
  - Save transformations in Power Query.
  - Load cleaned dataset into Power BI model.
- **Outcome:** Dataset ready for visualization dashboards.

## 3. Outcome of Week 1

By the end of Week 1:

- The FEMA dataset was cleaned, standardized, and loaded into Power BI.
- Key derived fields (Fiscal Year, Incident Duration, Assistance Flags) were created.
- The dataset is now reliable for building dashboards in subsequent weeks.

## 4. Next Steps (Week 2 Preview)

In Week 2, the same cleaning workflow will be implemented in Python to validate reproducibility, automate transformations, and prepare for advanced analytics.