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Disaster Response and Recovery

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Emergency Response

- Disaster response is statutory coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. From there, the respective agencies are then mobilized to respond to the specific aspects of the disaster, whether it be inclement weather, wildfires, or flooding.
- Disaster response is funded through a mixture of recurring, nonrecurring, and emergency orders. The state also has displayed a habit of preemptively funding its disaster response agencies, such as signing emergency/executive orders to the Energy, Mineral, and Natural Resource Department's Forestry division before any disaster has begun.

Recovery and Legislative Investment

- The predominant response mechanism that the state utilizes is through emergency orders and the funding tied to them. In more extreme disasters, the Legislature has also called special sessions to specifically invest in post-disaster recovery, as well as investing in disaster response through either capital outlay or nonrecurring funding.
- This practice was seen following the Salt and South Fork fires in Lincoln County when the Legislature invested \$100 million in disaster recovery. The Legislature also invested \$100 million for disaster recovery following the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon Fire. Yet beyond this traditional funding mechanism, the executive has invested significant funding towards disaster recovery through the use of emergency/executive orders.
- Since 2020, the governor has issued hundreds of executive orders allocating hundreds of millions of dollars to handle emergencies. In FY25, the governor issued 360 emergency/executive orders and authorized \$257.7 million in emergency spending. So far in FY26, the governor has issued over 195 executive orders and authorized \$137 million in emergency funding.

Recent Legislation

- There have been two recent efforts to update and augment the state's ability to respond and recover from natural disasters.
- The first, House Bill 191, was passed during the 2025 legislative session, would have created two new funds related to wildfires: the post wildfire fund and the wildfire suppression fund. The bill would have expanded funding for wildfire suppression and post wildfire work, beyond the current recurring funds existing in Forestry's budget and would have enabled for swifter response to wildfires. The bill also carried expanded reporting requirements and increased transparency regarding the state's disaster response spending. The bill was vetoed by the governor.
- The largest proposed change to the state's ability to respond to natural disasters was through House Bill 180. Passed unanimously through the Legislature in the 2026 session, the bill proposed to restructure the current funding mechanisms for executive orders and provide more transparency and oversight to the process.

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- The governor vetoed the bill, leaving in place a financial natural disaster response framework which lacks necessary oversight and fiscal prudence and potentially infringes on the constitutional obligations of the Legislature.