



## Lisa Miller & Associates

Business Development, Government Consulting, Public Relations

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### Mitigation a Cheap Date Considering Post-Storm Breakups

New report demonstrates fewer deaths and injuries, too

If you could spend \$1 today to avoid spending \$6 in the future, would you do so? That's the proposition raised by the National Institute of Building Sciences in a recent study on reducing the costs of natural disasters. With NOAA declaring 2017 the costliest year on record for weather disasters, the report is timely and its conclusions eye-opening for anyone who lives in, owns, manages, insures, or regulates structures.

The report, [\*Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2017 Interim Report\*](#), reviewed 23 years of federally funded mitigation grants by FEMA, HUD, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). It found mitigation funding can save the U.S. \$6 in future disaster costs for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation. The public-sector mitigation strategies the project team studied include:

- For flood resistance, acquiring or demolishing flood-prone buildings, especially single-family homes, manufactured homes and 2- to 4-family dwellings.
- For wind resistance, adding hurricane shutters, tornado safe rooms and other common measures.
- For earthquake resistance, strengthening various structural and nonstructural components.
- For fire resistance, replacing roofs, managing vegetation to reduce fuels and replacing wooden water tanks.

The report also examines scenarios that focus on designing new buildings to exceed provisions of the 2015 International Codes (I-Codes), the model building codes developed by the International Code Council. The report demonstrates that investing in hazard mitigation measures that exceed code can save \$4 for every \$1 spent. Here are some strategies to exceed minimum 2015 I-Codes:

- For flood resistance (to address riverine flooding and hurricane surge), building new homes higher than required by the 2015 IBC.
- For resistance to hurricane winds, building new homes to comply with the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) FORTIFIED Home Hurricane standards.
- For resistance to earthquakes, building new buildings stronger and stiffer than required by the 2015 IBC.
- For fire resistance in the wildland-urban interface, building new buildings to comply with the *2015 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code* (IWUIC).

The project team estimated that just implementing these two sets of mitigation strategies would prevent 600 deaths, 1 million nonfatal injuries and 4,000 cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long term. The report acknowledges that while mitigation is a good investment, the reality is that not everyone is able or willing to bear these construction costs for more resilient buildings. Past NIBS [reports](#) address incentives to help make this happen.