What does disaster assistance spending look like?

The federal government spent $277.6 billion on disaster assistance programs and activities from fiscal years 2005 through 2014. This is across 17 federal departments and agencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department and Agency</th>
<th>Total Obligations During Fiscal Years 2005 Through 2014 (Dollars in Thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>$145,641,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$10,787,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Commerce</td>
<td>$2,486,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>$5,020,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>$30,631,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$277,644,360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all disaster assistance spending can be quantified. For example, costs associated with the U.S. Coast Guard’s search and rescue appropriation and are not separately tracked. Also, activities such as temporary medical facilities cannot be easily measured.

What type of assistance?

We examined federal programs and activities that provide financial and non-financial forms of disaster assistance. These activities include:

- Financial
  - Grants
  - Loan programs
  - Insurance programs
- Non-Financial
  - Technical assistance
  - Public health
  - Environmental cleanup

We divided the assistance into three categories:

- Disaster-Specific Programs
- Disaster-Applicable Programs
- Non-Quantifiable Disaster-Applicable Programs and Activities

Disaster-Specific Programs

- Typically designated for disaster-specific assistance
- Example: Department of Housing and Urban Development

Disaster-Applicable Programs

- Not specifically designated for disaster or emergency activities
- Example: Department of Health and Human Services

Non-Quantifiable Disaster-Applicable Programs and Activities

- Some examples:
  - Not specifically designated for disaster or emergency activities
  - Example: Department of Agriculture

Which disasters receive assistance?

The federal government provides assistance before and after disasters. Some examples are:
- Presidential-declared major disasters and emergency declarations
- Stafford Act Disasters:
  - Hurricane Katrina (2005)
  - Sandy (2012)
- Disaster-Specific Programs and Activities:
  - Deepwater Horizon oil spill (2010)
  - Ferguson/St. Louis, Missouri (2014)
- Non-Quantifiable Disaster-Applicable Programs and Activities:
  - Hurricane Katrina (2005)
  - Sandy (2012)

Our report contains a detailed look at each agency’s disaster assistance obligations and expenditures.