

FEMA Planning Exercise Envisioned Deep Workforce Cuts

Story by Gabe Cohen, CNN / Excerpt retrieved via MSN NEWS - 1/14/2026 (Posted 1w)

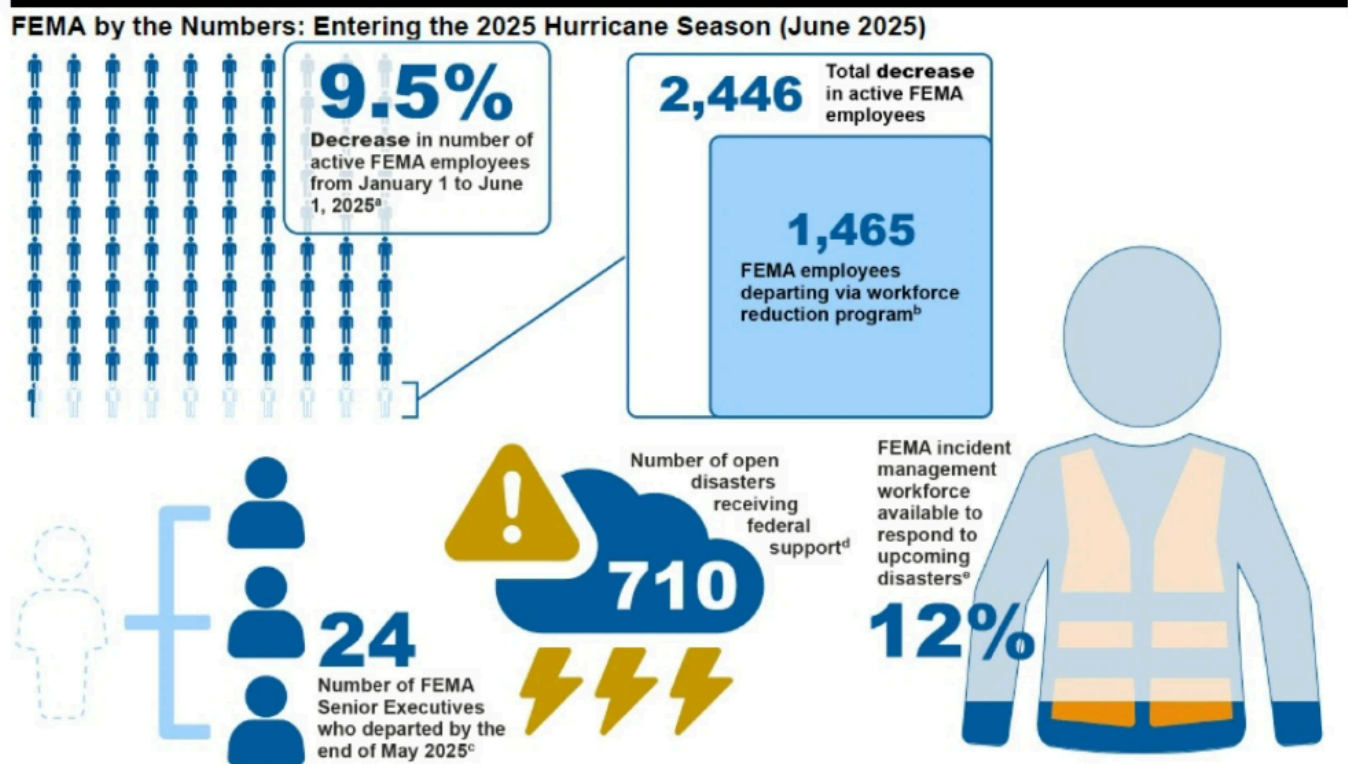
Full article:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/fema-planning-exercise-envisioned-deep-workforce-cuts-adding-to-uncertainty-around-agency-s-future/ar-AA1TEc30>

Overview:

The document discusses a proposed plan under the Trump administration to significantly reduce the workforce of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The plan raises concerns about FEMA's ability to respond effectively to disasters and the implications for state-level emergency management.

Key Points:



Source: GAO summary of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) data; Icons-Studio/stock.adobe.com. | GAO-25-108598

(GAO)

1. Proposed Workforce Reductions:

- FEMA's permanent full-time staff would be reduced by 15%.
- Disaster response staff would be cut by 41%.
- Surge workforce (teams responding to major disasters) would be reduced by 85%.
- Overall, FEMA's workforce would be cut by more than half.

Percent of FEMA Incident Management Workforce Available at the Start of Hurricane Season

Staffing levels have been trending down for years.

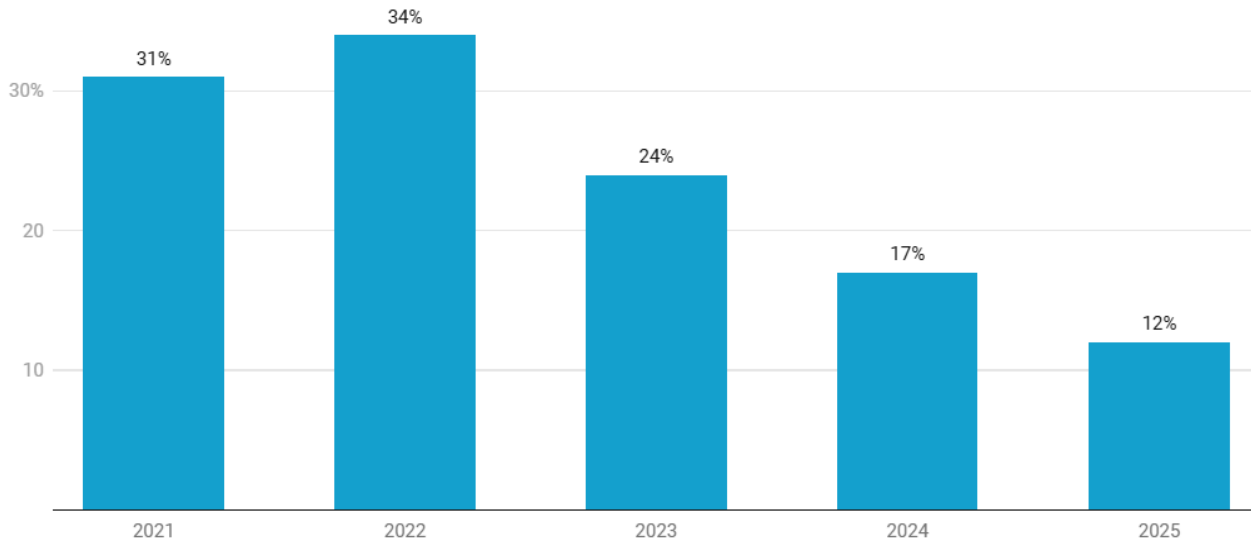
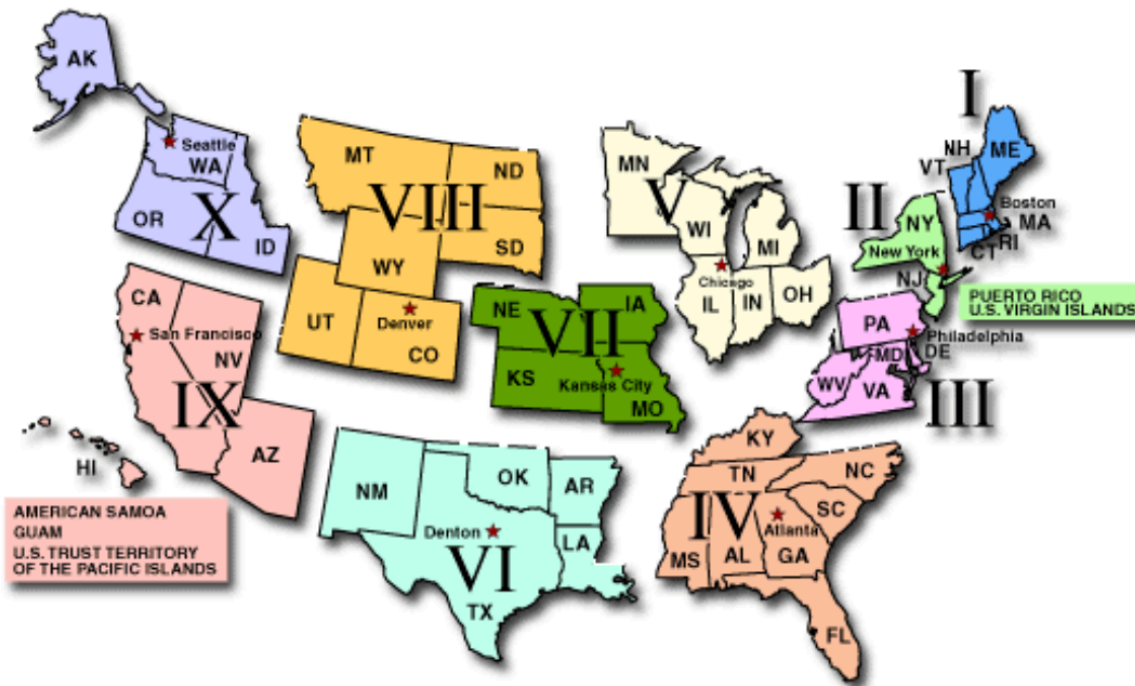


Chart: Governinn • Source: GAO • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

2. Impact on Disaster Response:

- Fewer federal workers would be available during disasters.
- States would need to take on more responsibility for disaster response and recovery.
- States may struggle to navigate the complex federal aid system.



SOURCE: Map of FEMA regional offices across the U.S.

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/bulletins/f6dc43>

3. Recommendations from FEMA Review Council:

- A special task force recommended a 50% reduction in FEMA's workforce.
- Suggested moving full-time staff from Washington, DC, to regional offices.

4. Concerns and Challenges:

- FEMA leaders warn that downsizing would hinder disaster response capabilities.
- FEMA was already short over 6,000 employees as of 2023, with additional losses in 2025 due to layoffs and buyouts.
- States are not adequately prepared to handle major disasters independently.
- Federal aid is delayed due to bureaucratic hurdles, causing states to tighten budgets and lay off local emergency management staff.

Uncertain Future:

The White House postponed the final meeting of the FEMA Review Council, leaving the agency's future unclear. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has indicated reluctance to support such drastic cuts, despite the Trump administration's push to overhaul FEMA and shift disaster response responsibilities to states.

* For more resourced information regarding FEMA Workforce Reductions, View Links Below

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/monicasanders/2026/01/07/how-fema-job-cuts-could-make-disasters-even-more-costly/>
- <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/hiring-retention/2026/01/concerns-mount-over-fema-staff-reductions/>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/01/politics/dhs-cutting-fema-disaster-response-staff>