

EDEN reduces the impact of disaster through education

Disasters have painted the United States red. Very few U.S. counties have zero federally declared disasters in the past 40 years, and most, shown in medium shade of red, have had 13 to 18. Keep in mind that most disasters – up to 90 percent – are not federally declared.

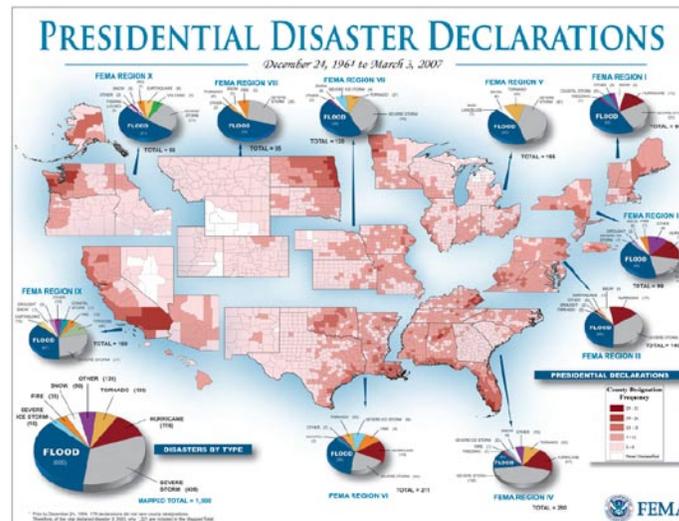


Figure 1: Presidential Disaster Declarations, 1964-2007, courtesy of U.S. Department of Homeland Security and FEMA

According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), total economic damage costs in the U.S. exceeded \$35 billion in the first seven months of 2011. By August, 2011 tied all of 2008 for the most billion-dollar weather disasters (9), and following hurricane season, 2011 may be the record breaker. Trends indicate more disasters are on the way.

That's why more than 270 extension specialists at 70 plus institutions around the U.S. and three territories dedicate every resource at their disposal toward disaster education using proven, research-based information. That network of people and institutions is nationally branded as the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). They live and work directly at the community level, effectively addressing the economic and human impact of disasters nationwide.

The need for disaster education

EDEN is a relatively young network, established in 1994 in partnership with USDA, but has a growing influence in disaster education. "If more people would use the disaster education provided by EDEN, then our job in recovery would be easier," says the CEO of the Hope Crisis Response Network, Kevin Cox.

EDEN has become a national partner with FEMA, and in 2011 signed a partnership agreement with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. Current USDAⁱ funds are leveraged by member institutions in a **four-to-one ratio** with state and local funding in EDEN.

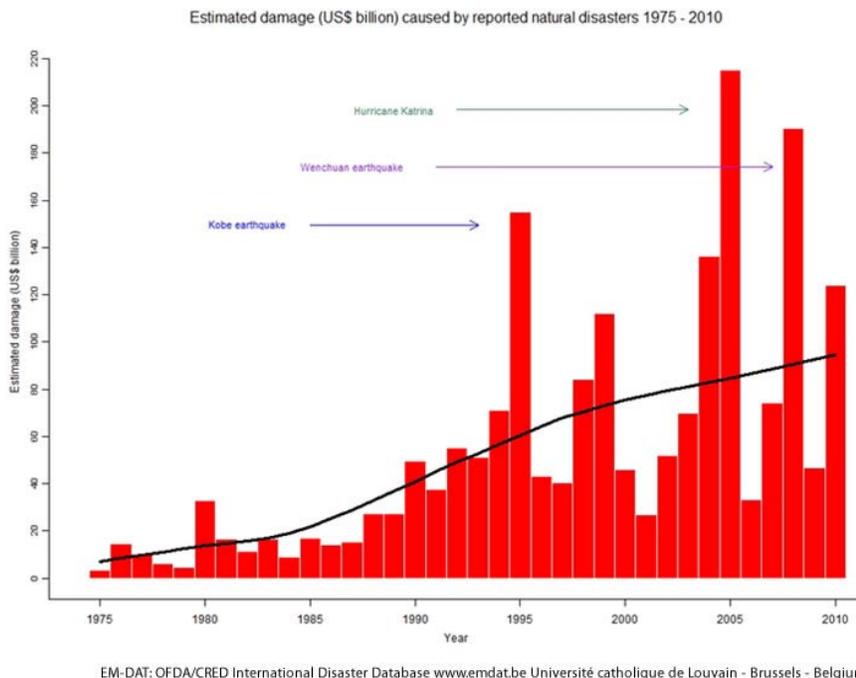


Figure 2: Estimated damages (\$billion, US) caused by reported natural disasters 1975-2010, figure courtesy of EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database.

The EDEN mission is to reduce the impact of disasters through research-based extension education. This network of multidisciplinary professionals ensures that the Cooperative Extension System can appropriately respond to local, state, regional, national and international education needs during a crisis.

When individuals, families, and communities suffer from a disaster, EDEN has resources to help mend personal loss, rebuild farms and help communities recover and rebuild homes, businesses and lives. EDEN is active in all phases of disaster which means they can help communities and individuals become more disaster resilient. Communities that are disaster resilient are economically more sustainable. Their citizens are less dependent on the hundreds of million dollars in local, state and federal support. This ultimately helps reduce the amount of government funding needed for disaster response and recovery.

When the value of EDEN is broadly considered across all states and disasters, the return on investment (ROI) from the federal funding provided is significant and irreplaceable. With a growing frequency of disasters across the U.S. in recent years, now is the time to recommit to sustainable support and commitment to EDEN’s valuable national mission. For more information see <http://bit.ly/EDENbrochure>, or contact Virginia Morgan, EDEN Chair (morgamv@aces.edu) or Rick Atterberry EDEN Chair-elect (ratterbe@illinois.edu).

ⁱ USDA support comes through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)