

REPORT ON
FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE
IN 1969

Office of Emergency Preparedness
March 1970

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The weather in 1969 was "unique," according to the Environmental Science Services Administration. The year was also unique for Federal disaster assistance, both in funding and in administration and coordination.

The Disaster Act of 1950 and its Administration

The Federal Disaster Act of 1950 (PL 81-875, as amended) gives the President broad powers to supplement the efforts and resources of State and local governments in alleviating suffering, hardship, and damage caused by "major disasters." On request of the Governor of a State, the President determines whether an occurrence is of sufficient severity for a declaration of a "major disaster" in the State. Such a declaration makes available the assistance authorized by this Act, as well as aid from several agencies whose authority to assist stems from such a declaration.

The Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) has responsibility for designating the specific areas (usually counties) within the State to which the declaration is applicable. The Director also has been delegated the President's authority to direct Federal agencies to provide assistance in declared major disasters and to coordinate their assistance activities. This authority is further delegated by the Director to OEP Regional Directors, extending the President's authority to an official who operates in the disaster area.

On the basis of an agreement with the Governor of a "major disaster" State, OEP provides financial and other forms of assistance to the State and its political subdivisions. These relief and recovery activities authorized by PL 81-875 include actions for preserving life and property; replacement or repair of essential public facilities; removal of wreckage and debris; and temporary housing arrangements for those who have lost the use of their homes in the disaster. OEP also reimburses other

Federal agencies for disaster assistance activities performed at its direction. Funds for these activities are specifically provided to the President for purposes of such disaster assistance.

The Number of Disasters and Cost of Assistance in 1969

During calendar year 1969, there were 29 major disaster declarations -- the largest number in any year since the program began in 1950. Major disasters affected 23 States -- six of them twice (California, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). The declarations were clustered in the middle of the calendar year, with 25 in the second and third quarters. All of these disasters involved flooding. Five resulted from the snow melt in the northern Midwest; five were caused by Hurricane Camille; two involved both tornadoes and flooding; all of the others resulted from heavy rains. (See Figure 1, below.)

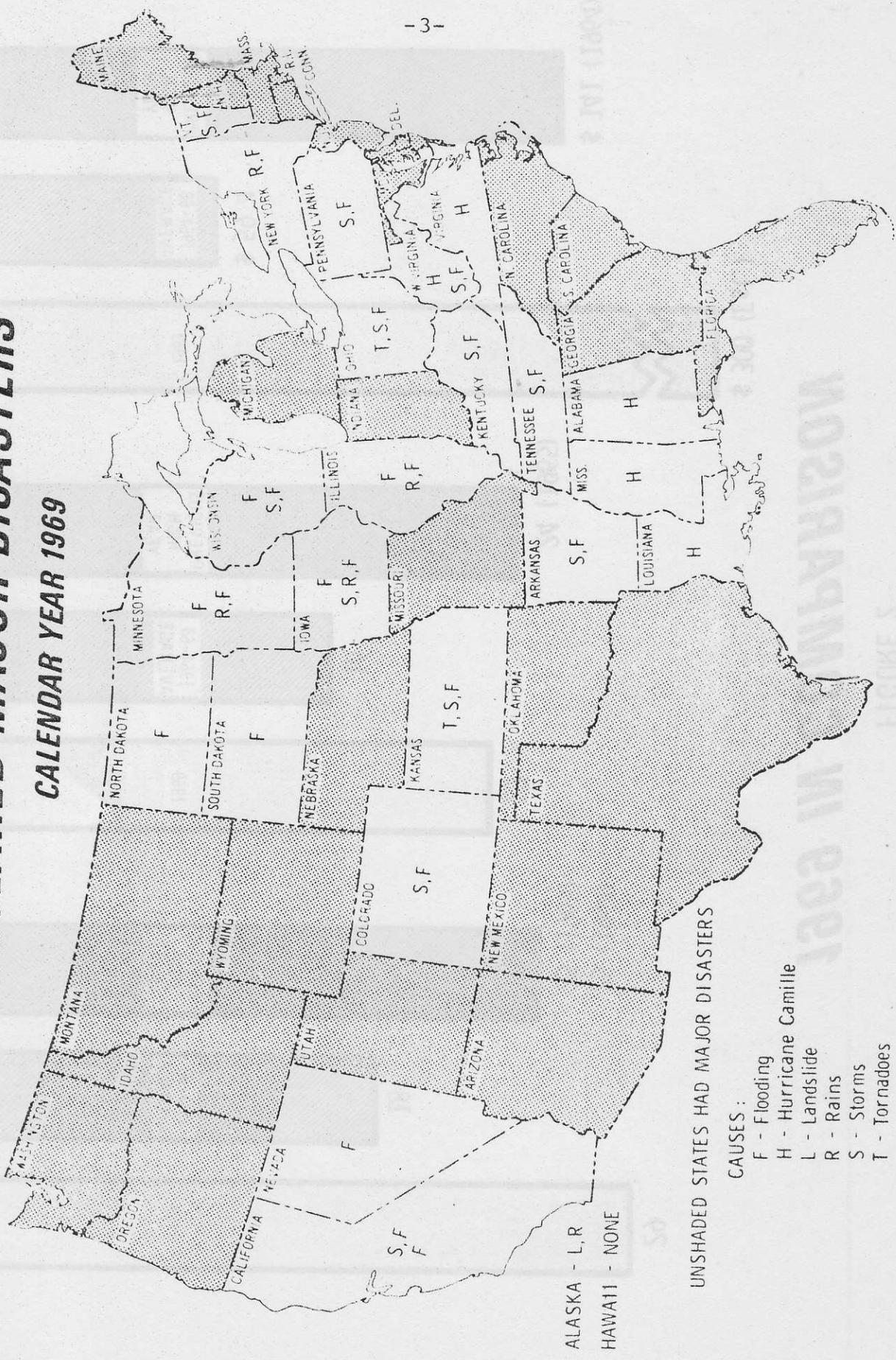
Hurricane Camille caused the greatest loss of life and destruction of property. Of the other disasters, the most deaths (36, according to the Red Cross) were due to a tornado and flooding in Ohio early in July; the largest number of people made temporarily homeless (approximately 13,000) resulted from flooding at Minot, North Dakota in April; and the most extensive property damage (an estimated \$265 million) was due to floods in California.

The number and extent of declared disasters during the year required a very substantial increase in Federal disaster assistance above the level of the previous year. The \$148,970,000 allocated from the President's Disaster Relief Fund during calendar year 1969 is the largest amount allocated in a single year since the passage of the law. All but \$500,000 of that amount was for disasters declared in 1969. (See Table 1, attached.) Before Federal assistance work on these 29 disasters is completed, the total allocation is expected to reach \$300 million. (See Figure 2, below.)

These Disaster Relief Funds comprise only a part of the Federal aid provided. The disaster loan programs of the Small Business Administration and the Farmers Home

DECLARED MAJOR DISASTERS

CALENDAR YEAR 1969

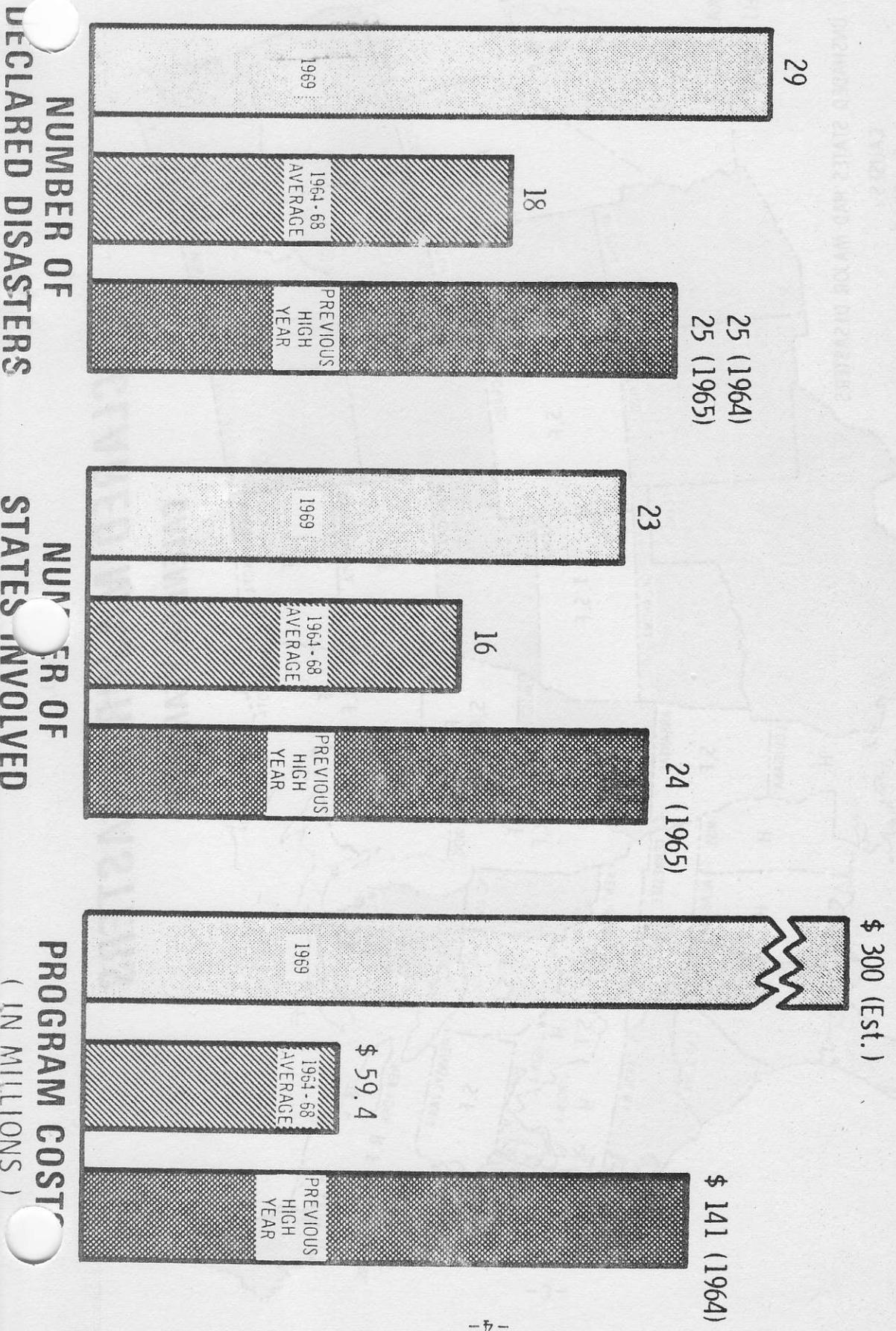


UNSHADED STATES HAD MAJOR DISASTERS

- CAUSES :
- F - Flooding
 - H - Hurricane Camille
 - L - Landslide
 - R - Rains
 - S - Storms
 - T - Tornadoes

1969 IN COMPARISON

FIGURE 2



Administration were of major assistance during 1969 to homeowners, businessmen, and farmers. Other programs such as food supplies from the Department of Agriculture, community relations services from the Department of Justice, and legal assistance grants from OEO have also helped many disaster victims.

The initial budget request for \$20 million for the President's Disaster Fund for FY 1970 (prepared in 1968) was increased by later amendments, and \$170 million has already been appropriated. A further appropriation is required, and a supplemental request has been transmitted to the Congress. For FY 1971, \$65 million has been requested, based on the average annual allocation over the previous five years. Should the need arise, additional appropriations will be sought. (Table 2, attached, indicates appropriations for the President's Disaster Relief Fund, 1951-1969, and actual outlays in calendar year 1969.)

The Disaster Relief Act of 1969

The Disaster Relief Act of 1969 (PL 91-79), which became law on October 1, expands the Federal disaster assistance program. Permanent provisions of the Act include assistance (matching funds) to States in planning for State and local aid to individuals suffering disaster losses and appointment of a Federal coordinating officer for each major disaster. Provisions terminating on December 31, 1970, cover: 50-50 funding of permanent highway reconstruction, timber sales contracts, damaged timber removal, larger SBA and FHA loans (including forgiveness of \$1,800 for eligible applicants), provisions concerning temporary housing, food coupons, disaster unemployment compensation, and debris removal from private property.

Executive Order 11495 delegated administration of PL 91-79 to OEP, except for those sections relating to food stamps and disaster loan programs. The law applies to all major disasters since June 30, 1967.

Some sections of the Act, such as the disaster loan authority, did not require financial resources from the

Disaster Relief Fund. Other provisions, such as those providing matching funds for State plans, for permanent highway reconstruction, for unemployment compensation, and for debris removal from private property beyond that done under PL 875, were not executed until the President's Fund was replenished and authority for expenditure was provided by the FY 1970 Appropriations Act. Public Notice was published in the Federal Register on November 29, 1969, with an invitation to States to submit applications for assistance under PL 91-79. The first checks for unemployment compensation were distributed on December 18, the day following apportionment of additional funds. The detailed OEP regulations for the new Act were published on December 23.

Under PL 81-875, debris has been cleared from private property when necessary to protect public safety or health. Following Hurricane Camille, OEP directed the Corps of Engineers to clear debris from private property along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and in Louisiana (financed initially by Corps funds, but to be reimbursed from the President's Disaster Fund). This initial effort was completed by December 31, 1969, and resulted in the removal of over 850,000 tons of debris from private property, clearing the major portion of the urban areas at an estimated cost of over \$12 million. The Governor of Mississippi provided the State plan for debris clearance from private property required by PL 91-79 on January 7, 1970. Arrangements for execution were immediately initiated.

Principal Disasters in 1969

The two most catastrophic disasters, measured in cost to the President's Disaster Assistance Fund, in the 20-year history of the program accounted for over four-fifths of the 1969 requirements for appropriations. These were the California floods and Hurricane Camille.

California was hit hard by storms in mid-January. Flooding and mud slides severely damaged or destroyed roads, bridges, dikes, levees, and water-supply and sewerage facilities, and prompted residents to move from their homes. The President declared a major disaster on January 26; of the 58 counties in California, 37 were included in the disaster area. PL 81-875 disaster relief allocations during 1969 for this one disaster alone amounted to \$108 million.

On August 17, Hurricane Camille struck the Mississippi River Delta area in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast in Mississippi, with winds of up to 190 miles per hour and tides of over 20 feet.

The Gulf Coast of Mississippi was damaged to a degree and extent unprecedented in the history of the Federal disaster program; one Delta parish in Louisiana was also especially hard hit. Other areas in these two States and in Alabama suffered lesser damage. The remnants of the storm moved over Tennessee and Kentucky, but no significant damage resulted. As it passed over the mountains of West Virginia, however, the storm intensified, and torrential rains in western Virginia caused flash flooding in small headwater streams and flooding of the James River. (One location reported 27 inches in 24 hours.) These flash floods struck many Virginia homes in rural valleys in the dead of the night, when warning was virtually impossible. The hardest hit county in Virginia, Nelson County, lost nearly one percent of its population.

The Weather Bureau warning for the Gulf Coast areas was timely, accurate, and adequate. As the storm approached the Gulf Coast, shelter was provided for over 80,000 people by State and local authorities and the Red Cross. Evacuation operations, involving over 20,000 people in Louisiana and over 100,000 in Mississippi, were well carried out, according to the Federal interagency evaluation initiated after the hurricane.

Hurricane Camille caused 259 known deaths; more than 60 persons are still missing. Public and private property loss is estimated at about \$1.5 billion. The loss of life on the Mississippi Gulf Coast was due, not

to lack of warning, but to a decision by some individuals to stay despite the warning. (Mississippi had not directly experienced a massive hurricane since 1947; Louisiana had endured Hurricane Betsy in 1965.)

The Governors of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia provided leadership for emergency operations in the crisis period. Despite extensive damage, Louisiana rallied comparatively rapidly, as did Alabama, Virginia, and West Virginia. Mississippi, with many more people and more communities affected, confronted greater problems. The State is programming beyond relief and rehabilitation to long-range rebuilding of the Gulf Coast area. One major step, achieved by mid-December, was preparation and acceptance of a building code which will reduce susceptibility of new construction to hurricane damage.

At the time of the hurricane, a significant number of organized resources were already in the Gulf Coast area -- a Naval Construction Battalion Center, Keesler Air Force Base, a NASA installation, as well as the Mississippi National Guard. Hundreds of professional and volunteer workers from the Red Cross and from other private agencies were quickly on the scene. And, besides OEP, 25 Federal Departments or agencies aided in relief and recovery from the effects of Hurricane Camille: Treasury, Defense (including all three military services), Justice, Post Office, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor HEW, HUD, Transportation, FCC, FDIC, FHLBB, FPC, FRB, GSA, ICC, NASA, OEO, RRB, SSS, SBA, USCSC, and VA.

OEP established a field office, under a veteran Regional Director, reporting directly to the National Office. Located in Gulfport, it was close to the Mississippi Governor's field office and to those of some of the principal Federal operating agencies. OEP also opened three subordinate field offices in other parts of the disaster area.

As of December 31, 1969, \$13,570,000 had been allocated from the President's Disaster Fund to the five States affected by Hurricane Camille. This amount, however, is not a true measure of the Federal effort. For example, in four months, the Corps of Engineers spent over \$21 million for debris clearance on the Gulf Coast. The

Department of Housing and Urban Development, in providing over 5,000 mobile homes, temporarily allocated from its own funds approximately \$14 million. These relief efforts were initiated by the Director of OEP, using his authority (from PL 81-875) to direct other agencies to use their resources for disaster aid.

The total Federal outlay for Hurricane Camille relief and rehabilitation work eligible under the applicable Public Laws (81-875 and 91-79) is now expected to amount to approximately \$90 million.

Disaster Prevention -- Operation Foresight

The flood prevention effort (Operation Foresight), initiated by the President late in February 1969, is a significant innovation in the Federal disaster program. The Weather Bureau reported that saturated frozen ground beneath abnormally deep snow threatened to cause severe spring flooding in many of the northern States, particularly in the upper Midwest. OEP coordinated a comprehensive program to combat this flood threat. Federal agencies, operating under their regular legal authorities, together with the American Red Cross, took immediate actions to assist State and local governments in an unprecedented preparedness and damage averting effort. Of the many agencies involved, the Army's Corps of Engineers had the largest role. The Corps assisted over 400 communities in 26 states and built over 200 miles of temporary levees at a cost of approximately \$20 million. This action prevented flood damages estimated at \$200 million, as well as extensive personal hardships.

The National Governors' Conference, in a unanimous resolution, commended Operation Foresight, as follows:

The National Governors' Conference commends the Executive Office of the President and more particularly the Office of Emergency

Preparedness for timely action in preparing for the potentially disastrous floods which occurred throughout the United States in the early spring of this year. The foresight exercised in convening representatives of Federal and State agencies, developing emergency plans, and providing for short-term preventive measures provided immeasurable benefits in lives saved and in property which remained undamaged.*

A More Comprehensive Program for Disaster Assistance

During the year, there was a deliberate effort to expand and integrate disaster relief and rehabilitation programs of the Federal agencies. This expansion and integration, drawing on the extensive disaster experience in 1969, indicate clearly the importance of positive leadership and coordination from the Executive Office of the President.

Preventing or lessening disaster effects -- as illustrated by Operation Foresight -- will continue to receive attention. Nearly 80 percent of the declared disasters of the last eight years involved flooding or storm-driven water, which underlines the importance of flood prevention and flood warning.

OEP Regional Directors are continuing to coordinate and advise on Federal help in emergency situations without waiting for a Governor to request a major disaster declaration. In at least a dozen instances in 1969, the necessary Federal aid was extended without such a request.

Interagency studies initiated by Presidential direction immediately after Camille have provided the basis for improvement of coordination for Federal agencies providing disaster assistance. Skilled personnel from over 20 agencies took part in the most intensive studies of this kind ever undertaken.

* Policy Positions Adopted by the National Governors' Conference, 61st Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs, Colorado, August 31 - September 3, 1969.

Some of the studies' conclusions point to additional or improved legislative authority, while other conclusions can be implemented by executive action. Some of the latter are: an improved information system to warn and instruct people and public officials in disaster areas, "one-stop" service for disaster victims, team management of critical activities, resolution of gaps and inconsistencies among the agencies' disaster programs, and improved communications arrangements based on analysis of requirements during large-scale disasters.

Strengthening OEP Coordination

The unprecedented number and extent of disasters in 1969 required that OEP shift experienced personnel from less urgent activities to disaster assistance activities. To meet the requirements of future disasters more adequately, more disaster assistance personnel have been added to the staff. New procedures have been designed and are being field-tested, and streamlined organizational arrangements have been established in OEP. An Operational Analysis Division in OEP has also been created to study all aspects of disaster assistance and provide recommendations for improvement in Federal disaster preparedness and operations. Computer-based disaster information and financial voucher processing systems are under development.

International Exchange Concerning Disaster

The interchange of information concerning disasters with other governments is certain to be useful, and OEP is handling this subject for the United States in the deliberations of NATO's new Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. During the past year, OEP also sponsored a conference in California on earthquakes. Under Department of the Interior leadership, OEP and other agencies are developing improved plans for dealing with oil-spill incidents.

Closer Cooperation with the States

Section 12 of PL 89-769 provides for reviews of State as well as Federal disaster programs. OEP is reviewing State programs in light of its on-going disaster studies and in light of recent disaster legislation. In conjunction with these reviews, OEP is holding orientation and training conferences for Federal and State officials.

Section 8 of PL 91-79 authorizes the President to provide assistance to the States in developing comprehensive plans and programs to provide State and local government assistance to individuals suffering losses as the result of a disaster. Twenty-three States have thus far indicated they will participate in this equal cost-sharing program, and three others have expressed interest but have not yet made a final decision.

Goal Restated

Federal Disaster assistance is a comprehensive program encompassing all aspects of disaster: prevention, preparedness, detection and warning, crisis assistance, relief and rehabilitation, and recovery. The effectiveness of the Federal Disaster Assistance Program is heavily dependent on strong Federal-State-local cooperation, because the Federal program is effective principally as a supplement to the efforts of State and local governments. The improvements in the program in 1969 will reduce damage and suffering -- some disaster damage will be avoided -- and when disasters do occur, assistance will be more timely and effective.

TABLE 1

DISASTER ALLOCATIONS -- 1969

<u>State</u>	<u>Disaster</u>	<u>Date of Presidential Declaration</u>	<u>Allocations</u>
California	Severe storms & flooding	January 26	\$ 108,000,000
Arkansas	Severe storms & flooding	February 15	350,000
Minnesota	Flooding	April 18	5,000,000
North Dakota	Flooding	April 18	3,700,000
South Dakota	Flooding	April 18	1,050,000
Nevada	Flooding	April 19	150,000
Iowa	Flooding	April 25	1,710,000
Wisconsin	Flooding	May 1	500,000
Colorado	Severe storms & flooding	May 19	4,100,000
Illinois	Flooding	June 6	750,000
Tennessee	Severe storms & flooding	July 11	550,000
Wisconsin	Severe storms & flooding	July 11	275,000
Kentucky	Severe storms & flooding	July 15	200,000
Ohio	Tornadoes, severe storms, & flooding	July 15	3,000,000
Kansas	Tornadoes, severe storms, & flooding	July 15	900,000
Minnesota	Heavy rains & flooding	August 5	200,000

<u>State</u>	<u>Disaster</u>	<u>Date of Presidential Declaration</u>	<u>Allocations</u>
Iowa	Severe storms, heavy rains, & flooding	August 14	\$ 1,250,000
California	Flooding	August 15	250,000
Mississippi	Severe storms & flooding (Hurricane Camille)	August 18	6,000,000
Louisiana	Severe storms & flooding (Hurricane Camille)	August 19	5,000,000
Pennsylvania	Severe storms & flooding	August 19	1,250,000
Virginia	Severe storms & flooding (Hurricane Camille)	August 23	2,000,000
New York	Heavy rains & flooding	August 26	515,000
Illinois	Heavy rains & flooding	August 30	500,000
Vermont	Severe storms & flooding	August 30	400,000
West Virginia	Severe storms & flooding (Hurricane Camille)	September 3	220,000
West Virginia	Severe storms & flooding	September 24	150,000
Alabama	Severe storms & flooding (Hurricane Camille)	November 7	350,000
Alaska	Heavy rains & a landslide	December 19	150,000
Subtotal			\$ 148,470,000
SUPPLEMENTAL ALLOCATIONS FOR PRIOR YEAR'S DISASTER			
Florida	Hurricane Gladys	Nov. 7, 1968	\$ 500,000
Total allocations, calendar year 1969			\$ 148,970,000

TABLE 2

HISTORICAL DATA

Total appropriations by Congress since fund's inception, August 31, 1951	\$ 690,850,000.00
Net Allocations	<u>-613,323,559.49</u>
Balance, President's Fund, December 31, 1969	\$ 77,526,440.51

PROGRAM EXPERIENCE, CALENDAR YEAR 1969

Disaster assistance:

Direct payments to States	\$ 46,848,445.70
Transferred to other Federal agencies for assistance to States	10,995,769.67
FP Administrative expenses	<u>1,422,115.52</u>
Total outlays, calendar year 1969 ^{1/}	\$ 59,266,330.89

^{1/} Including 1969 outlays attributable to prior year's disaster.