Background
When a federal disaster is declared following an extreme event, whether natural or man-made, taxpayers’ dollars are often used to help rebuild communities and cities around the country. In 2012 alone, 47 states received federal major disaster declarations, triggering a use of federal funds for relief efforts. When existing appropriated funds are no longer sufficient, disaster relief packages are often passed by Congress as “emergency measures” to expend more dollars on an unfunded basis. Billions of dollars are typically spent each year through these relief packages, and in this challenging economic climate, communities cannot afford to completely rebuild each time a disaster strikes. By utilizing resilient construction techniques, which can often be as simple as using longer nails or roof strapping, the built environment is protected from the increasing number and severity of natural or man-made disasters.

The benefits to using resilient construction methods are easily seen through reductions in property damage and taxpayer savings; however, several benefits exist that are beyond the easily apparent. For instance, disasters often result in widespread disruptions that often occur far beyond a federally declared disaster area, like power outages or supply chain disruptions. Resilient construction can assist in the mitigation of these impacts. Additional benefits to homeowners can also apply as, in many cases, a resilient home will also be an energy efficient one. Additionally, homeowners regularly receive breaks on homeowner’s insurance premiums due to owning a structure that can withstand a disaster.

An industry coalition of construction materials groups, insurance companies, and building safety organizations are working together to support legislative efforts to increase the use of resilient construction techniques in the construction or retrofitting of residential and commercial buildings. In the 113th Congress, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), introduced H.R. 2241, the Disaster Savings and Resilient Construction Act of 2013. The bill, which was originally introduced in 2012, provides a tax credit to business or home owners who re-build in areas that were declared federal disaster areas.

In addition, the Water Resources Development Act was passed in the Senate in 2013, which included two studies of how resilient construction can impact vulnerabilities in natural disasters and save money and provided a definition of a resilient construction technique. The cement and concrete industry will continue to advocate for similar and expanded provisions on resilient construction for inclusion in the House bill.

Cement and Concrete Industry Position and Desired Approach
The U.S. cement and concrete industry strongly supports legislative efforts that compel businesses, communities, and/or governments to adopt measures to build or re-build using resilient construction techniques. The coalition will continue to monitor activity on Capitol Hill to identify opportunities to insert language incentivizing a revision of building codes or providing a tax incentive to builders or homeowners that would ensure resilient construction techniques are more widely utilized.