

Resilient Construction

Issue: In the wake of major disasters like Superstorm Sandy, the need to construct homes that can withstand natural disasters is becoming more and more apparent. Congress can employ various means to create incentives to build more resiliently.

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. Additional benefits to homeowners can also apply as 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. Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), introduced H.R. 2241, the Disaster Savings and Resilient Construction Act of 2013. The bill provides a tax credit to business or home owners who rebuild in areas that were declared federal disaster areas.

In addition, the Senate passed a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill, S. 601, on May 15, 2013. The House passed its bill, titled the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), H.R. 3080, on October 23. Both bills include sections promoting resilient construction, including definitions of a "resilient construction technique."

PCA Position: The U.S. cement and concrete industry strongly supports legislative efforts that compel businesses, communities, and/or governments to adopt measures to build or rebuild using resilient construction techniques.