

# Disaster Response and Readiness

## Summary

When major emergencies occur, Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) is the primary agency that provides Oregonians with **mass care, shelter, food, water, and disaster social services**. This legislative session, ODHS is requesting the additional staffing and resources necessary to meet these critical responsibilities and help Oregon communities prepare for future disasters.



## Advancing a resilient Oregon

From wildfires to earthquakes, ODHS plays a dual role in responding to emergencies: We provide **mass care and other services in times of disaster** and **invest year-round in community resilience**. The agency has fed and sheltered thousands of people since 2020 – many of them wildfire survivors, recently discharged COVID patients, or Afghan refugees. Simultaneously, through our partnerships with Tribes, community-based organizations, and the private sector, we continue to build a statewide network of communities that are well-prepared to navigate future emergencies.

But while the state's [Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#) identifies ODHS as the primary agency for providing mass care, emergency shelter, food, water, and disaster social services, **critical gaps in staffing and other resources** limit the agency's capacity to meet these responsibilities. As described in both the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission's [2018 report](#) and the state's September 2020 [wildfire response review](#), these ongoing gaps must be addressed in order to coordinate effective statewide emergency response and ensure the resilience of Oregon's communities.

As Oregon continues to feel the impacts of recent wildfires and braces for future disasters like a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, our emergency response system is in critical need of additional investment.

## Request

ODHS is requesting a \$38.2 million investment to fund 48 permanent staff positions as well as crucial equipment including tents, mobile shelters, and mobile mass care facilities. Together, these resources will allow ODHS to meet its statutory responsibilities, effectively coordinating feeding, shelter, first aid, and other emergency assistance in partnership with local and Tribal governments and community-based organizations throughout the state.

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