



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Disaster Table Files, ca. 1992 - 7/30/2009 Record Group 311

Updated June 5, 2020

1. What information is in these records?

This series contains data documenting major disaster declarations, emergency declarations, and fire management assistance declarations. The data consists of federal disaster numbers, states affected by the disaster, name, type, severity, and date of the disaster. The series includes records of disasters dating back to 1953 up through July 30, 2009.

2. Why were these records created?

The agency created these tables to track disasters by assigning a federal disaster number to major disaster declarations, emergency declarations, and fire management assistance declarations. The agency then used these numbers within databases and tables to identify disasters. Each type of disaster also has a numeric code which is also used by the agency to categorize disasters.

3. A number of records in the field titled "Severity ID" have a coded value of "4" which is not defined in the agency documentation. What does the value "4" mean in this field?

There are 383 records in this field with a coded value of "4" which is not defined in the agency documentation. This code is no longer used by the agency but had previously been defined as "Fire Suppression Authorization" and is applicable to records which were created before 10/01/2001. All 383 records with a coded value of "4" were created prior to that date.

4. Do records in this series relate to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) photographs relating to disasters?

Yes. The Disaster Table Data File as of July 30, 2009 was transferred to the National Archives with the "Photographs Relating to Disasters and Emergency Management Programs, Activities, and Officials" (National Archives Identifier 626166), which documents the period 1989 to September 30, 2008. Those photographs are not accessible in AAD, but each of the photographs in that transfer has an item-level description and digital photo NARA's Online Catalog. An earlier transfer, "Index to Photographs Relating to Disasters and Emergency Management Programs, Activities, and Officials" (National Archives Identifier 626165), documenting the period 1989 to September 30, 2005, and the digital photos it references, are accessible for search and retrieval in AAD.

The Disaster Table Data File as of July 30, 2009 contains a record for federally declared disasters from 1953 to July 30, 2009. Thus the information in it provides information on disasters documented in FEMA photographs accessible in AAD or NARA's Online Catalog.

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5. What is the difference between the Disaster ID and the Federal Declaration Number?

The “Disaster ID” is a unique internal identification number used by the agency. The “Federal Declaration Number” is an external identification number assigned by the agency to track federally declared disasters.

6. Where can I find additional information about a disaster?

Some additional information about a disaster may be available at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website at: www.fema.gov/disasters.