



**American Planning Association  
Planner's Advocacy Week  
The Safe Communities Act of 2005 (H.R. 3524)**

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Introduced in the House of Representatives on July 28, 2005, by U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), H.R. 3524 has been referred to the Committees on Homeland Security, and Transportation and Infrastructure.

**What does H.R. 3524 do?**

The bill authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to make grants to encourage community safety by incorporating disaster mitigation and emergency preparedness into comprehensive land use planning and urban development, and for other purposes.

**Why is H.R. 3524 important?**

Disaster response and relief efforts impose significant costs to U.S. taxpayers. Federal expenditure is heavily weighted to post-disaster recovery, rather than mitigation. Investment in prevention will save both lives and money. Smart planning can redirect development away from hazardous areas and protect lives and property from future disasters.

Many states have land use statutes that do not currently support comprehensive planning for safe communities, and many states are undertaking efforts to update and reform statutes to better enable planning efforts that incorporate long-term hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness. Land use and public facility planning at both the state and local levels have not had adequate financial resources to fully incorporate the threats posed both by natural and human-caused disasters.

Prevailing land use patterns often place people, structures, and environmental systems at great risk. Poorly regulated rural communities and small towns located on the metropolitan fringe often face significant growth pressures, resulting in haphazard development patterns that do not incorporate regional impacts on critical disaster-reduction systems, such as open space and wetlands.

Land use planning is rightfully within the jurisdiction of state and local governments, but the federal government should provide a supportive climate and statutory context for comprehensive planning.

**How much will H.R. 3524 cost?**

The bill authorizes \$57.25 million to be appropriated each year for the fiscal years 2007 through 2011. Grant-eligible projects include: comprehensive risk assessment and inventory of critical infrastructure, land use planning for natural hazards and terrorism security, updating building codes, and urban design techniques for risk reduction.

Now consider that flooding caused an average of \$4.4 billion per year in private and public property damage between 1990 and 2003. Annual federal spending on wildfire suppression exceeds \$1.6 billion. Earthquakes cause an additional \$4.4 billion of damage each year. The World Bank and U.S. Geological Survey have estimated that \$40 billion invested in **risk reduction strategies could have saved as much as \$280 billion** in worldwide economic losses from disasters in the 1990s — a seven dollar return for each dollar invested.