

US hit by record number of billion-dollar disasters so far this year

September 11 2023



A flooded house is seen in Crystal River, Florida after Hurricane Idalia made landfall in August 2023.

Between January and August, the United States was struck by a record-breaking 23 weather and climate disasters where losses exceeded \$1

billion in each case, official data showed Monday.

The tally for 2023 has already exceeded the previous record of 22 such events in 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said, and four months still remain in the year.

These disasters included fires in Hawaii in August, flooding in California in the spring, and Hurricane Idalia that made landfall in Florida on August 30.

Together, they "caused 253 direct and indirect fatalities and produced more than \$57.6 billion in damages," NOAA said. Two more potential billion-dollar events—Tropical Storm Hilary on the West Coast, and the drought affecting the South and Midwest—remain under investigation.

Rachel Cleetus, policy director with the [climate](#) and energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said, "These record-breaking numbers, during a year that is on track to be one of the hottest ever, are sobering and the latest confirmation of a worsening trend in costly disasters, many of which bear the undeniable fingerprints of climate change."

Since 1980, the year NOAA began tracking these events, the United States has sustained 371 billion-dollar events, adjusted for inflation.

Between 2018-2022, the annual average has been 18.0 events, compared to 8.1 events between 1980-2022.

2023 is likely to be the hottest year in [human history](#), and [global temperatures](#) during the Northern Hemisphere summer were the warmest on record, the European Union climate monitor said last week.

The United States meanwhile saw its ninth-warmest August on record,

according to NOAA.

Though 2023 has had the highest number of billion-dollar disasters, it's still behind other years in terms of total economic damages.

Hurricane Ian, which struck Florida in September 2022, caused 152 deaths and losses worth \$112.9 billion.

The costliest year was 2017, with \$383.7 billion damages adjusted for inflation. The bulk of that damage came from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, which struck in quick succession.

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