



FROM PRIORITY TO POLICY CHOICE:

*Reading Between FEMA's Funding Lines When the
Threat Persists*

By: Claire Moravec

ABSTRACT

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) *National Priority Areas* (NPAs) shape where billions in homeland security grant dollars flow, but changes to the list don't always track with changes in the threat landscape. In 2025, FEMA cut *Combating Domestic Violent Extremism* (DVE) and *Community Preparedness & Resilience* as stand-alone NPAs, reframed intelligence sharing into a narrower focus on task forces and fusion centers, and added a 10% minimum for border crisis response. Yet, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) own 2024 and 2025 *Homeland Threat Assessments* continue to rate DVE, resilience, cyber risk, and election security as persistent, high-priority threats. Removing an NPA eliminates a federal funding mandate — not the danger it addresses. This article unpacks what “removal” means, clarifies allowable cost flexibility, and makes a case for why practitioners must look beyond FEMA's set-asides to intelligence-driven risk. When the federal government stops requiring the investment, the responsibility falls squarely on states, regions, and cities to keep funding where the threats remain.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) release updated *National Priority Areas* (NPAs) (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2025a) for the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) (FEMA, 2025b) and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). These NPAs are not just “nice to have” suggestions — they are funding levers.

When FEMA designates a topic as an NPA, states and urban areas must address it in their grant investment justifications, allocate a minimum percentage of their total award to that area, and report their progress back to FEMA. For state and local Homeland Security practitioners, Emergency Management, and public safety, NPAs can shape where grant dollars flow and which projects move forward.

In 2025, FEMA trimmed the NPA list from six to five areas and eliminated *Combating Domestic Violent Extremism* (DVE) and *Community Preparedness & Resilience* as stand-alone priorities. This raised concerns in some circles that FEMA was signaling a reduced threat level for DVE, or that community resilience was no longer a critical factor.

SIDE-BY-SIDE: 2024 VS 2025 NPAS

FY 2024 NPAs (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2024a)

1. Protecting soft targets & crowded places
2. Information & intelligence sharing and analysis
3. Combating DVE
4. Cybersecurity
5. Community preparedness & resilience

6. Election security (3% minimum)

FY 2025 NPAs

1. Protecting soft targets & crowded places (now explicitly includes election sites)
2. Supporting Homeland Security Task Forces & fusion centers
3. Enhancing cybersecurity
4. Enhancing election security (3% minimum)
5. Supporting border crisis response & enforcement (10% minimum)

KEY SHIFTS

In FY 2025, FEMA's NPAs saw notable changes. Combating DVE and Community Preparedness & Resilience were removed as stand-alone priorities, eliminating their dedicated federal funding set-asides. The previous focus on "information and intelligence sharing and analysis" was reframed into "Supporting Homeland Security Task Forces & fusion centers," giving the priority a more operational but narrower scope. Additionally, a new priority was added for border crisis response and enforcement, requiring a 10% minimum allocation.

THE 2024 & 2025 DHS HOMELAND THREAT ASSESSMENT CONNECTION

DHS's annual *Homeland Threat Assessment* (HTA) continues to identify a steady set of high-priority threats; however, FEMA's 2025 NPA list shows notable shifts that reflect funding policy choices more than changes in the underlying risk picture.

The 2024 (DHS, 2023) and 2025 (DHS, 2024b) HTAs assess the threat from DVE as "persistent and high," particularly from lone actors and small cells capable of rapid mobilization, with election-related targets remaining attractive. Despite this consistency, FEMA removed DVE as a stand-alone NPA in 2025, which signals a change in funding priorities rather than a threat reduction. Similarly, while both HTAs stress the importance of building community preparedness and resilience to withstand compounding and cascading hazards, FEMA's elimination of this NPA removes guaranteed investment in resilience capabilities that the intelligence community still considers operationally valuable.

The HTAs also underscore the need for timely, actionable information sharing across all levels of government. The 2025 NPA reframes this as support for task forces and fusion centers, aligning with DHS's operational model but narrowing the focus from broader information-sharing efforts. On border and immigration pressures, the HTAs report that challenges remain significant, even with some decline from peak encounter levels; here, FEMA's addition of a new border crisis response and enforcement NPA—with a 10% minimum allocation—aligns with HTA priorities.

Finally, both assessments highlight cybersecurity risks to critical infrastructure and the threat of election interference, including through disinformation campaigns. Retaining NPAs for cybersecurity and election security, with the election security minimum preserved, reflects a close match between FEMA's funding framework and DHS's intelligence-driven threat picture.

WHAT "REMOVAL" REALLY MEANS

When FEMA removes a topic from the NPA list, two things change:

1. There is no longer a federal minimum spend requirement tied to that area.
2. FEMA will no longer track or enforce a percentage allocation for that topic in the SHSP or UASI award.

What does not change:

- The underlying threat environment.
- A state or urban area's ability to fund work in that space.

The bottom line is that, regardless of NPAs, states and urban areas retain discretion to use SHSP/UASI funds for any allowable activity that aligns with allowable cost rules under 2 CFR Part 200 and approved expenditures identified in FEMA's *Preparedness Grants Manual* (FEMA, 2025c).

Example: DVE

- **2024:** DVE was a National Priority Area. States and urban areas were required to dedicate a portion of their SHSP/UASI funding to DVE-related prevention, intervention, or response initiatives, and they had to demonstrate results in grant reporting.
- **2025:** DVE is no longer an NPA. States can still fund DVE initiatives—for example, community threat assessment programs, public awareness campaigns, or law enforcement training—but they are not required to spend a specific percentage of their federal grant.

This distinction is critical: **Elimination ≠ prohibition** and **Elimination ≠ reduced threat**.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR PRACTITIONERS

When FEMA removes an NPA, the guaranteed funding and federal requirement to address that topic disappear, but the threat itself may remain. For homeland security professionals, this shift underscores the need to think beyond FEMA's set-aside list and use broader intelligence sources, such as the DHS Homeland Threat Assessment, to guide investments. Threats like DVE and resilience gaps still pose a significant risk. Professionals should advocate for state and local prioritization and take advantage of the added flexibility to tailor funding to actual risk. This requires strong justification tied to Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk

Assessment/Stakeholder Preparedness Review results and clear documentation showing alignment with state and local strategies. Ultimately, the NPA list is a funding policy tool, not a definitive threat index, and when FEMA stops mandating investment, it falls to practitioners to ensure resources continue to flow where risks are real.

REFERENCES

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2025a, August 1). *FEMA announces nearly \$1 billion in federal funding to help states manage disaster preparedness* (Press Release No. HQ-25-075). U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved August 8, 2025, from <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20250801/fema-announces-nearly-1-billion-federal-funding-help-states-manage-disaster-preparedness>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2025b, August 6). *Homeland Security Grant Program*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved August 8, 2025, from <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/homeland-security>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2025c, August). *FY 2025 Preparedness Grants Manual*. Retrieved August 8, 2025, from https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd_fy2025-preparedness-grants-manual_082025.pdf

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (2023, September 13). *Homeland Threat Assessment 2024* (IA-23-333-IA). Retrieved August 8, 2025, from https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/23_0913_ia_23-333-ia_u_homeland-threat-assessment-2024_508C_V6_13Sep23.pdf

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (2024a, April 16). *DHS announces \$1.8 billion in preparedness grants*. Retrieved August 8, 2025, from <https://www.dhs.gov/archive/news/2024/04/16/dhs-announces-18-billion-preparedness-grants>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (2024b, September 30). *Homeland Threat Assessment 2025*. Retrieved August 8, 2025, from https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/24_0930_ia_24-320-ia-publication-2025-ha-final-30sep24-508.pdf

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Moravec is a nationally recognized strategic security and risk executive with over 10 years of experience protecting people, assets, and operations across the public and private sectors, including industry, technology, and government. A former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) intelligence leader and state homeland security executive, Claire has built and scaled global programs in security, trust and safety, and crisis management. She brings deep expertise in threat intelligence, incident response, and cross-functional stakeholder engagement. She has a proven

ability to translate complex risk into actionable strategies that drive enterprise resilience and align security initiatives with business goals.

At the FBI, Claire served as an intelligence and operations leader and was a founding member of the Bureau's Social Media Exploitation (SOMEX) team. She played a critical role in high-impact counterterrorism and intelligence operations and was awarded the FBI Medal of Excellence in 2017 for leading digital threat disruption efforts targeting nation-state actors within the Bureau's National Covert Operations Section.

In the private sector, Claire served as Senior Manager of Trust & Safety Response Operations at Snap Inc. (Snapchat), where she oversaw high-risk incidents involving platform misuse and user safety. She later became Chief Operating Officer of a seed-round threat intelligence startup focused on behavioral and insider threat assessment.

Across roles, Claire has advised on some of the nation's most complex and pressing security challenges, developing mission-critical frameworks to safeguard people, infrastructure, and organizational trust.

Claire holds degrees from Columbia University and Loyola University Chicago, and completed executive education through the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security Executive Leaders Program. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California, the University of Denver, and Saint Xavier University, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in emergency management, criminology, and clinical social work.

The views expressed are solely those of Claire Moravec and do not reflect the official positions of the FBI, the State of Illinois, any U.S. government agency, university, or private sector organization with which she has been affiliated.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by *Homeland Security Today*. *Homeland Security Today* is a publication dedicated to advancing awareness, collaboration, and innovation across the homeland security enterprise. In support of open access and the widest possible dissemination of knowledge, copies of this publication and the articles contained herein may be printed, downloaded, and shared for personal, research, or educational purposes free of charge and without permission.

Any commercial use of *Homeland Security Today* content, or the articles published herein, is expressly prohibited without the written consent of the copyright holder. The copyright of all articles published in *Homeland Security Today* rests with *Homeland Security Today*.

Homeland Security Today is the leading news and analysis platform of the Government
Technology & Services Coalition (GTSC).