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Promoting Strong Building Codes Should Be Part of Congress’ Response to Hurricane Irene

(Washington, DC – September 16, 2011) – The BuildStrong Coalition urged Congress today to include legislation that would promote the adoption of strong building codes in the disaster relief bill it will soon pass.

“As Congress debates the federal government’s role in disaster aid, lawmakers should start looking for a reasonable return on investment. While we can’t know when Mother Nature will strike again, we can be better prepared for it. Simple measures, such as encouraging stronger construction through stronger building codes, can save lives and property, and reduce taxpayer exposure to future disasters,” said Jimi Grande, chairman of the BuildStrong Coalition.

In 2011, there have already been 10 major disasters that combined have cost the nation more than \$40 billion. Early estimates indicate that Hurricane Irene will go down as the eighth most costly catastrophe in the nation’s history. When Congress takes action to help the states and communities hit hardest by Irene, it is vital that lawmakers seize this opportunity to advance proven mitigation strategies that can better prepare the nation the next time a major storm hits.

The BuildStrong Coalition is advocating that legislation introduced by U.S. Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Albio Sires (D-NJ) and Richard Hanna (R-NY), which would encourage states to voluntarily adopt model building codes be included in the disaster relief bill that Congress is likely to debate and pass in the coming weeks. The bill, H.R. 2069, The Safe Building Code Incentive Act of 2011, would provide states that adopt model national building codes with an additional four percent in post disaster grants. The legislation would be administered by FEMA and does not require an additional appropriation.

Strong building codes are a proven way to mitigate the damage from natural disasters. According to a landmark study conducted by the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center, strong building codes would have reduced wind damage from Katrina by 80 percent, saving \$8 billion. Another study conducted for the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety found that losses from Hurricane Andrew, which caused more than \$20 billion in insured damage in Florida in 1992, would have been reduced by 50 percent for residential property and 40 percent for commercial property if those structures were built in accordance with model code standards.

BuildStrong is a coalition of national business and consumer organizations, corporations, and emergency management officials dedicated to stronger building codes, in order to protect homes and buildings from the devastation of natural disasters. For a complete list of members and additional information please visit www.buildstrongamerica.com.