ONSOLVE®

2023

OnSolve Government Risk Impact Brief

How Risk Data, Technology and Collaboration Support Agency and State Resilience

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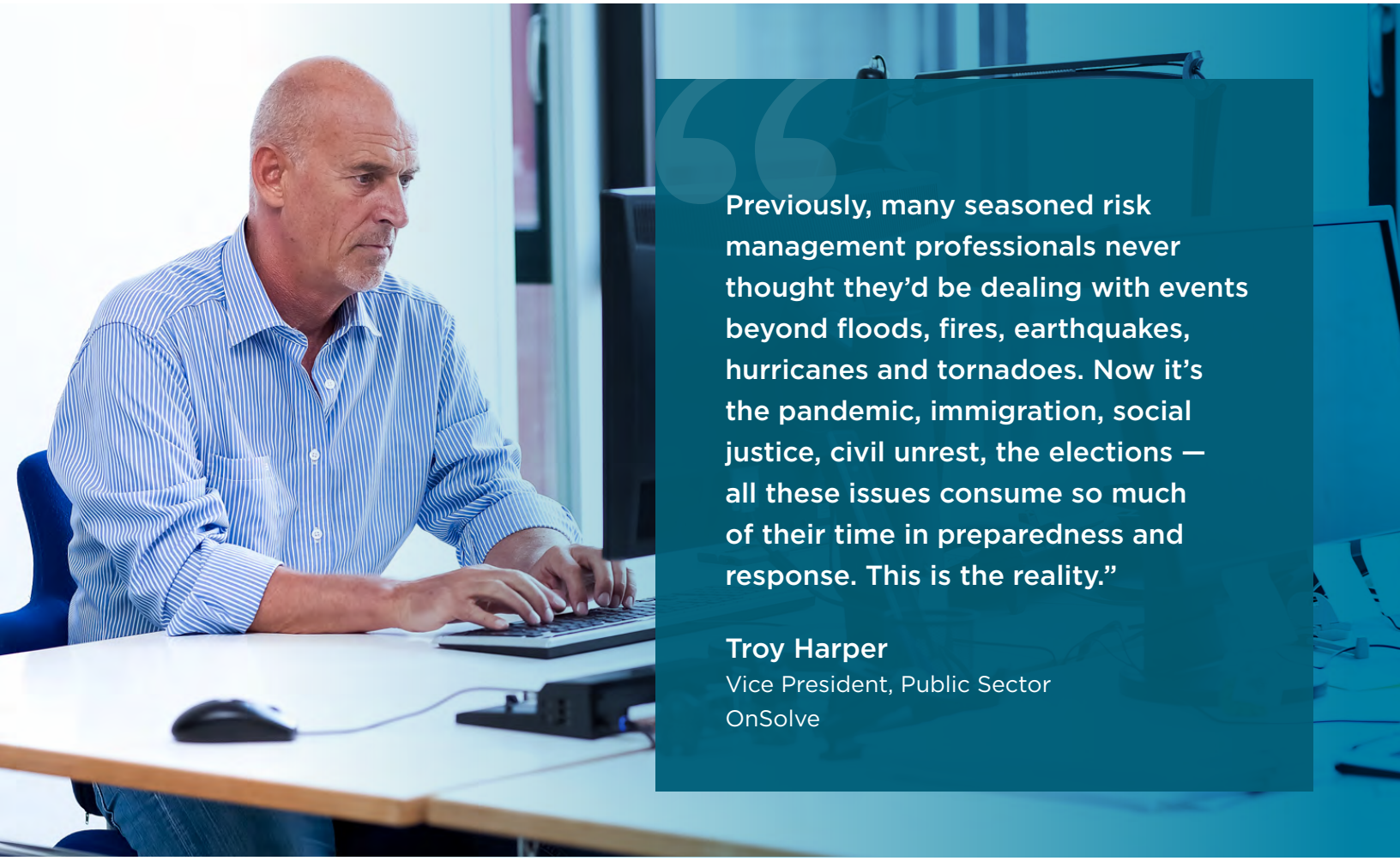
The Interconnected State of Our States

The U.S. threat landscape is dynamic — a crisis that starts in one location often impacts other areas or ignites secondary risks in highly unpredictable ways. Currently, we're experiencing these types of ripple effects across the country — from shifting weather patterns to the long-term impacts of crime and ongoing public health threats to communities. And the potential for civil unrest is a pervasive issue as the 2024 election approaches.



> **Previously, many seasoned risk management professionals never thought they'd be dealing with events beyond floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes. Now it's the pandemic, immigration, social justice, civil unrest, the elections — all these issues consume so much of their time in preparedness and response. This is the reality."**
>
> **Troy Harper**
> Vice President, Public Sector
> OnSolve

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What Does This Mean for Government Agencies?

To keep the public safe in this dynamic threat landscape, government agencies and states must empower their people to make the most of modern technology, consistently collaborate with each other and leverage partnerships with the private sector.

Data is at the heart of this mission. There's an abundance of anecdotal information available about potential threats from news outlets, social media and even other agencies. To improve preparation and response, agencies need to balance this anecdotal information against data from sources that has been filtered by advanced artificial intelligence (AI) technology and then vetted by human analysts.

This powerful combination of risk data, technology and collaboration enables agencies and leaders at all levels of government to make informed, strategic decisions based on data-driven narratives for true resilience. Armed with reliable insights into threats and the ability to communicate and coordinate response strategies in real time, agencies and states can better prepare for and respond to dynamic risks – whether they're reasonably anticipated or completely unexpected. To accomplish this, government — in partnership with the private sector — will need to empower its people to seek out and explore innovative solutions.

This brief explores real-world examples of the dynamic and interconnected risk landscape and proposes solutions for agencies to improve resilience. To do this, we analyzed risk data from OnSolve Risk Intelligence from January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023. We also gathered information from external news and research sources, as well as perspectives from internal and external experts with deep experience in government and crisis management.

This risk data analysis illustrates trends and identifies both known and emerging issues arising from physical threats faced by government agencies at the Federal and State levels. It also discusses how leaders at all levels of government can proactively prepare for and mitigate the impact of future incidents through collaboration and technology.

"We can't put our heads in the sand. Nobody is immune. It's going to happen. Risk data provides the information to prove it. We can use the data to look to the future and answer the question, 'What are my risks?' — and prepare for those now."

Eddie Bertola, MA
Bertola Advisory Services

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Four Real-World Examples of the Impact of Dynamic Risk

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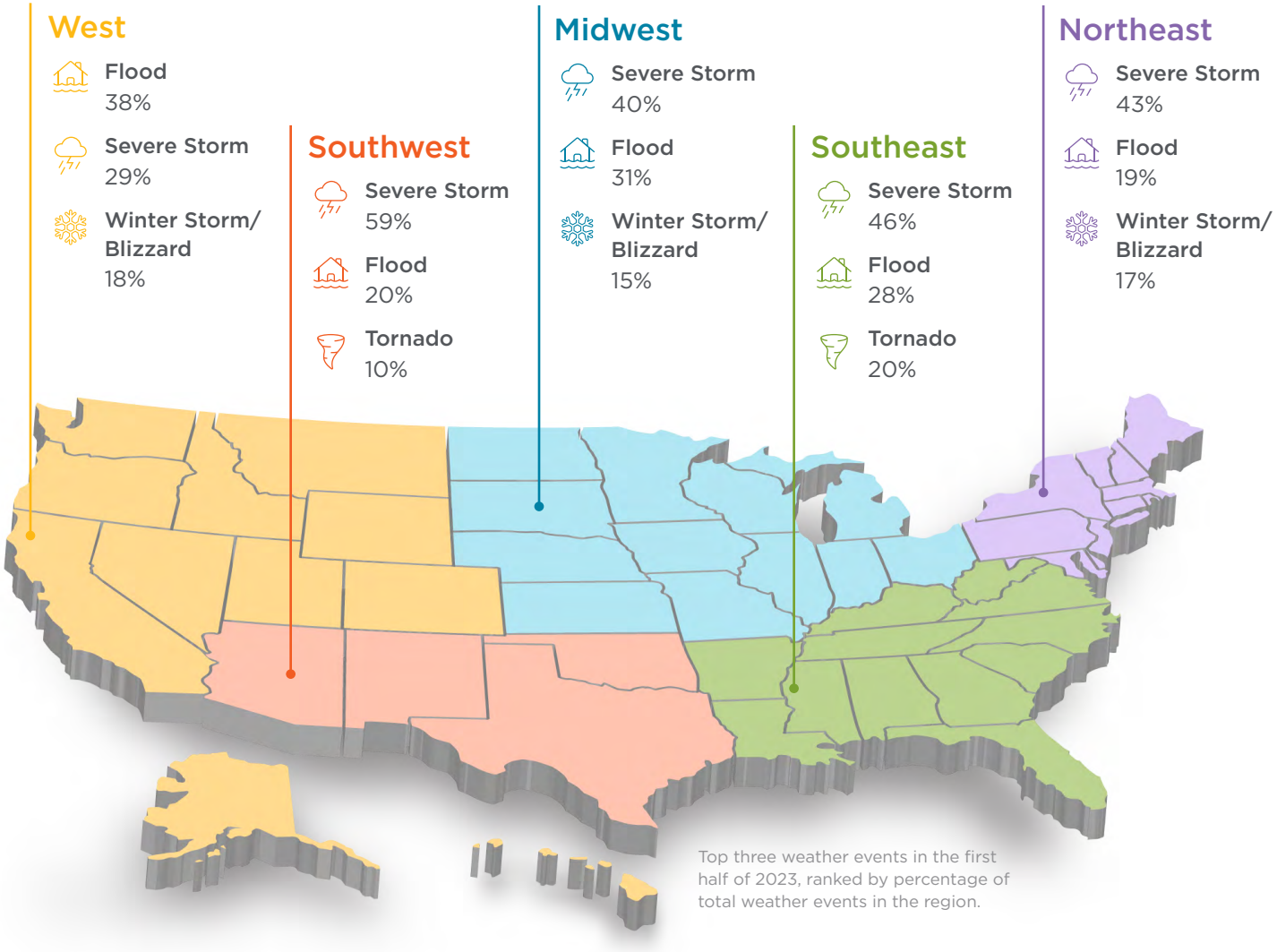
one

Expect Unexpected Weather Extremes

Our data shows the top three types of severe weather/natural disaster reports in the first half of 2023 in the U.S. were severe storms (43 percent), floods (29 percent) and tornadoes (11 percent). What's perhaps more alarming than the number of reports, however, are the unexpected locations in which these events are happening and the longevity and severity of cascading impacts.

The Top Three Extreme Weather Events Reported by Region



Top three weather events in the first half of 2023, ranked by percentage of total weather events in the region.

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One example of shifting weather patterns that poses extreme danger to local communities is the migration of **Tornado Alley** eastward toward the Southeast's "Dixie Alley." The migration has been sizeable, shifting eastward by 400 to 500 miles, demanding the attention of crisis and emergency management personnel at all levels.

In the first half of 2023, 57 percent of all U.S. tornado reports were in the Southeast, compared to 24 percent in the Midwest, according to our data. The Southeast had the most reports of tornadoes in January, and the states of Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama had the most reports in the Southeast during the first half of 2023.

State and local governments need to track historical threat data like this to better anticipate and prepare for changing extreme weather patterns. Localities that previously might not have had rigorous tornado preparation and response measures in place need to reassess and take proactive steps. Traditional tornado sirens as the only means of warning simply will no longer suffice.

The **Canadian wildfires** point to the far-reaching and long-lasting impacts of extreme weather events that agencies must be able to better anticipate. Nearly half (49 percent) of the wildfires reported in Canada during the first half of 2023 were reported in June. These wildfires caused air pollution issues throughout the U.S., with our data finding that 59 percent of U.S. air pollution reports during the first half of 2023 occurred during the month of June. The smoke from the Canadian wildfires had a ripple effect throughout the U.S. and even reached Europe.

Across 19 various days of Canadian wildfire smoke that occurred from the end of April to the beginning of August, asthma-related ER visits rose by 17 percent across the country compared to normal. Certain areas seemed to be impacted more than others, with hospital traffic reported as 46 percent higher in New York and New Jersey. Additionally, asthma-related ER visits rose by 82 percent in New York state on the day with the worst air quality.

Wildfire smoke has an economic impact on the entire country, causing outdoor activities to be canceled, worker productivity to decline and medical bills to increase. A recent study found that across the U.S., workers lost $125 billion a year as a result of wildfire smoke.

Severe storms were the top extreme weather event reported in the first half of 2023. **The 2023 South Central Texas ice storm** is another example of the cascading impacts of extreme weather. Our data on the 2023 ice storm identified trends that can be used to better plan and allocate resources for the future.

2023 South Central Texas Ice Storm Data

(Between January 30, 2023 and February 2, 2023)

Type of Event	Number of Reported Events During Ice Storm	Percentage Change Compared to Two Weeks Prior
Power Outage	4,544	+338%
Road Accident	1,922	-74%
Theft	1,588	+100%
Assault	1,115	-17%

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> We need a system to help us make sense of the data so we can make smart, informed and timely decisions — a system that correlates the data and shows the interdependencies, so we can start to be more predictive. This is where we need to go — to be less reactive and more proactive."
>
> **Peter Gaynor**
> Former FEMA Administrator

During this freeze, at one point more than 400,000 Texas electricity customers were without power. Small businesses were hit particularly hard, with some reporting tens of thousands of dollars in losses. Many were still feeling the effects from 2021 when a winter storm killed 246 people and resulted in over $195 billion in damages. Recovery from multiple severe and historically unprecedented storms in such a short period is causing significant hardship.

Although ice storms are common occurrences, Texas's infrastructure wasn't built for these temperatures. While the cost-prohibitive nature of preparing for severe winter weather has kept many local governments from taking action, the repercussions of these recent storms are forcing Texas cities to consider infrastructure investments.

The lesson for Texas and the rest of the country? When it comes to weather emergencies like tornadoes, wildfires and ice storms, cities and states across the U.S. must find a way to anticipate – and prepare for – the unexpected. Agencies that use technology to monitor risk evolution can use historical threat data to better predict the likelihood of new and shifting weather patterns. AI-filtered data and actionable intelligence about current threats can then help agencies focus on the events most likely to impact the people, businesses and public services in their community.

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two

Plan for Fallout From Aging Infrastructure

As America's infrastructure ages, it poses a significant threat to the operations of government agencies and the welfare of the general public. Structure collapses and road and construction-related challenges not only cause injury, loss of life and property damage, but also can disrupt supply chains and the ability of people to reach one another, access food or other resources, and travel to their jobs.

In the first six months of 2023, 68 percent of the structure collapses reported were building structure collapses and 21 percent were road and construction-related, according to our data. U.S. roads scored a "D" and bridges scored a "C" in the 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure. This report also revealed:

over
40%
of America's public roadways are in poor or mediocre condition.

close to
$17 trillion
of the nation's goods move on America's highways and roads, meaning the economic implications are severe and far-reaching.

The dangers of roadway collapse were highlighted by two recent incidents in Pennsylvania. Last year, the collapse of the Fern Hollow bridge injured several people. After an investigation found the bridge's legs had deteriorated due to rust, the National Transportation Safety Board advised cities and states to prioritize maintenance on bridges with weathering steel components. The investigation also led to a federal report recommending that 10,000 similar bridges be checked for corrosion.

This past June, an I-95 bridge in Philadelphia collapsed when it was struck by a truck hauling 8,500 gallons of gasoline. As the state worked to respond, this disaster affected the estimated eight percent of the national economy that uses the I-95 corridor. Repercussions were also felt by local small businesses, which reported losing customers following the collapse.

To keep people safe and protect the economy, government agencies must coordinate aggressive preventative maintenance with efficient response tactics. Technology makes it simpler and more effective for response teams, local officials and law enforcement to collaborate quickly when an incident occurs and to communicate with the public about the situation and contingency plans.

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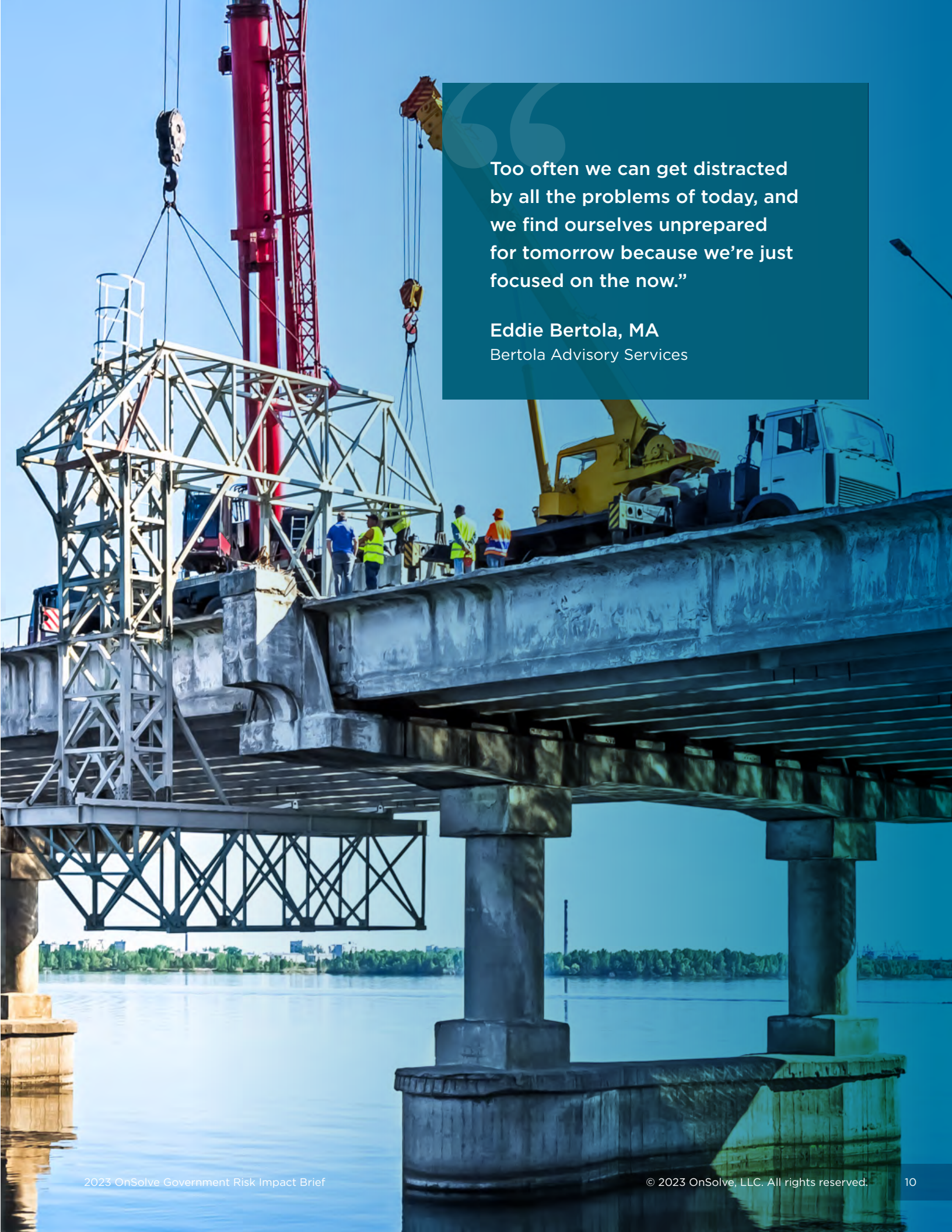

> Too often we can get distracted by all the problems of today, and we find ourselves unprepared for tomorrow because we're just focused on the now."
>
> **Eddie Bertola, MA**
> Bertola Advisory Services

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three

Raise a Red Flag on Rising Rates of Theft

Reports of theft made up 67 percent of all crime reports in the U.S. in the first half of 2023. Specifically, vehicle theft and retail theft are becoming pressing issues, representing 35 percent and 16 percent of all theft reports respectively, according to our data.

Increases like these threaten the safety of residents and the economic stability of communities, especially when retailers may choose to leave a given area due to higher rates of theft and violence. Large big-box retailers have announced closures in multiple cities due to shoplifting and organized retail crime. Others are focusing on a combination of human resources and technology to combat the problem. This pairing will be key for government agencies around the country involved in the efforts to control this problem and attract local investment."

It's important to note that closures due to crime can have unrelated trickle-down effects if these retailers are a critical source of pre- and post-disaster resources for the local community, negatively impacting an agency's emergency preparedness and response capabilities.

Large-scale store theft is becoming a bigger part of overall retail losses annually, increasing by an average of 26.5 percent compared to the prior year, according to the National Retail Federation. The potential reasons for this increase are twofold. Sixty-one percent of Americans reported financial hardship because of rising prices in a recent poll, making people more likely to engage in theft for basic necessities.

But the bigger issue is **organized retail crime**, in which large-scale theft is coordinated in advance. This type of theft has become a "multi-billion-dollar problem," with the costs stemming from lost merchandise and the efforts to curtail future incidents. To combat organized retail theft, a number of states have invested in adding special task forces to their law enforcement. California alone has spent over $241.4 million to investigate and prevent organized retail theft in the past year.

Vehicle thefts have been rising nationwide, and that trend has continued. The number of vehicle thefts increased by 33.5 percent during the first half of 2023 when compared to the same timeframe in 2022. However, that increase jumps to 104 percent when compared to the first half of 2019, pointing to the persistent upward trend of auto thefts. The increase began during the pandemic, with Americans losing $7.4 billion in 2020 due to motor vehicle thefts. This form of crime has cascading impacts on the safety of communities as auto thefts are often tied to other crimes like robberies and drive-by shootings. The spike in occurrences also has long-term financial implications, as auto insurance premiums increase in the hardest hit regions and for cars deemed more susceptible to theft.

Local law enforcement and government agencies must work together to combat theft and protect residents and businesses. An analysis of historical risk data can identify emerging patterns in local crime, so resources can be effectively allocated and tactics can be properly adjusted for a stronger response.

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> Today, we respond to what we know – things we've seen before. We need to take a deeper dive into the interconnectedness and interdependence between these things we are unfamiliar with to get a better view of what's critical to our communities and nation. Technology can help speed up our understanding of that."
>
> **Peter Gaynor**
> Former FEMA Administrator

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four

Prepare for Disruptions Around the 2024 Election

As the 2024 elections approach, government agencies need to prepare in advance to keep people safe. Data from the 2020 elections can help agencies better predict what to expect so they can proactively prepare and plan.

Our analysis of data from the week of the 2020 elections (November 1, 2020, to November 7, 2020) found that several types of physical threats increased during this period compared to two weeks prior. This data shows government agencies need to be prepared for more than just an increase in the number of protests when it comes to the pending 2024 election period.

2020 Election Week Physical Threat Data

Type of Physical Threat	Increase in Reports During Election Week*
Protests	+250%
Explosions	+220%
Shootings	+65%
Arson	+38%

*Compared to two weeks prior to the week of the 2020 elections.

Protests and violence continued to be persistent threats in the weeks and months following the elections. Large protests continued in multiple cities. No area of the country was immune. During election week itself, there were 382 reports of protests according to our data, with the following regional breakdown:

2020 Election Week Regional Protest Data

Region	Percent of Reported Protests*
West	26%
Midwest	25%
Northeast	25%
Southeast	17%
Southwest	7%

*Percent of total reported protests during election week.

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> **We generally struggle to understand how events are interconnected. The more we start to understand this, the better our preparedness can be, the better our mitigation can be and the better our training will be. Because then we will have the totality of the information we need to train on what will happen."**
>
> **Eddie Bertola, MA**
> Bertola Advisory Services

When it comes to mass shootings, the numbers as of August 2020 already exceeded the year-end totals for each year from 2014 to 2018. In September of 2020, the FBI identified the election period up to the 2021 inauguration as a "potential flashpoint" and warned of a "violent extremist threat." The 65 percent increase in shootings during election week uncovered in our data aligns with this warning.

Other trends were also identified as part of the 2020 political violence climate.

- Post-election demonstrations involved unlawful paramilitary or armed actors more often than pre-election demonstrations.
- Certain states experienced a greater number of demonstrations and for a longer period of time, including contested states, states with large populations and states with greater mobilization efforts around social injustice.

Government agencies and law enforcement face an enormous challenge in today's highly charged atmosphere. Proactive crisis management requires an informed plan, the resources to execute it and commitment to a collaborative approach. Agencies can use this historical data and threat intelligence to better anticipate and prepare for the 2024 elections. Technology is at the foundation of this multi-pronged strategy.

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Mission Success is Driven by Risk Data, Technology and Collaboration

To achieve their mission, government agencies need access to accurate threat data that provides actionable intelligence. In addition to the historic mitigation and response data agencies already have, they need data that proactively surfaces the cascading impacts of events and that provides deeper insight into the ancillary impacts of threats.

It's essential that agencies put the right technology in place and make sure all personnel are properly trained in how to use it to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. Partnerships with crisis management technology vendors that understand the needs of government agencies provide the necessary support to help government workers protect our communities and our country.

Access to historical and real-time AI-powered threat intelligence and mass notifications makes it easier for agencies to improve strategy and execution. As the technology evolves with more advanced capabilities, agencies need to use it to their advantage.

Along with data and technology, agencies need to collaborate with each other and the private sector. Technology makes collaboration easier by enabling fast and efficient communications before, during and after critical events.

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Partnerships with the private sector make it possible to respond quickly and effectively, increasing the resources available to the public — often at a lower cost. When relationships are established in advance with organizations like the American Red Cross, local churches and retailers, requests for supplies and shelter can be made and met quickly. By aligning their efforts, agencies can strengthen preparedness.

For example, the Office of Emergency Management in Fort Worth, Texas, has pre-established relationships with social, civic and religious organizations across the city. These organizations have assigned responsibilities to set up, manage and staff extreme-temperature shelters, predominantly for the homeless population.

Utilizing city-owned facilities, pre-arranged agreements and exercised procedures, these entities support emergency management with specific skill sets and trust for a targeted subset of the population. These aligned efforts offer a proven track record of cost savings and a meaningful impact for response and recovery operations, compounding the city's resiliency exponentially.

"Critical events are no longer rare and random. In our new normal they're severe and frequent. This changes everything about how we think about responding to risk — from the models we use to planning, response and recovery actions."

Chris Hurst
Vice President, Value Engineering
OnSolve

AI-powered crisis management technology supports mission success and true agency resilience through:

Inter-agency Collaboration

- Facilitate inter-agency coordination for a holistic approach to public safety.
- Collaborate in real time with other agencies and response teams to adapt as a situation unfolds.
- Improve overall understanding of location risks and address them proactively alongside agencies sharing your theater of operations.

Public/Private Partnership

- Partner with private organizations and nonprofits to proactively plan before an incident occurs.
- Request assistance as soon as an event happens, increasing the resources available to the public at a lower cost to the government.
- Increase your ability to provide residents with access to shelter, water and medical supplies/assistance.

Public Safety Focus

- Use historical risk data and trends to identify unexpected threats and proactively plan for them.
- Detect pending threats like extreme weather and protests earlier and more accurately.
- Leverage targeted alerting and notification capabilities to keep residents and businesses informed before, during and after an event for improved public safety.

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Conclusion

Government officials are tasked with one of the most important jobs — keeping our nation safe. But they can't do it alone. As the threat landscape continues to evolve in unexpected ways and the effects of dynamic risks ripple throughout communities and the country, agencies must draw upon the powerful combination of three key elements:

Risk data

Insight into emerging trends and patterns in the risk landscape and the cascading impacts of dynamic risk based on historical threat intelligence to support informed, data-driven decision-making.

Technology

Access to real-time threat intelligence empowers agencies to identify risk and respond faster. Real-time two-way communications support a collaborative approach for improved response and recovery.

Collaboration

Agencies should work together to share the resources, information and technology needed to accelerate the discovery of risk and speed of recovery. The public and private sectors can no longer remain in their siloes if they hope to move from a reactive approach to risk to a more proactive approach.

An evolving risk landscape calls for an evolving approach to risk management. When agency personnel are armed with risk data, the right technology and collaborative partners, they can anticipate threats sooner, proactively prepare for the expected and unexpected, and improve public safety — and they can do it faster and more easily.

That's mission success and the path to agency resilience.

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Appendix

Methodology

This mid-year risk data analysis outlines the top risks that have occurred as a percentage of all events OnSolve detected from January 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023, that had the potential to impact its customers worldwide. The data in this report was gathered using OnSolve Risk Intelligence, an AI-powered technology that monitors over 50 risk categories of physical threats, in 30+ languages across 159 countries in real time. OnSolve uses AI and analyst-vetted information pulled from data sources that include local fire, police or emergency medical services departments, weather reports and alerts from government and non-government, verified sources, federal government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and other crisis management entities, local, national and international news, and critical event reports from verified social media feeds.

U.S. Regional Breakdown By State:

Midwest — IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI

Northeast — CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT

Southeast — AL, AR, D.C., FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV

Southwest — AZ, NM, OK, TX

West — AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MO, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY

OnSolve consulted internal, as well as external, subject matter and government agency experts in the creation of this brief. A special thank you to the following:

Expert Panel

Peter Gaynor is Senior Vice President and Director of National Resilience, Response and Recovery Programs at GEI Consultants, Inc. His experience includes serving as FEMA Administrator, the acting Secretary for Department of Homeland Security and Director for both state and local emergency management agencies. He oversaw FEMA's first ever operational response to a nationwide pandemic. He has more than 14 years of experience in emergency management and served for 26 years in the U.S. Marine Corps.

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Eddie Bertola is the founder of Bertola Advisory Services where he consults as a subject matter expert in mass notification strategies, emergency messaging, missing person alerts and engagement with the public during emergencies. He consults with FEMA IPAWS and other federal, state, local, territorial and tribal leaders as well as private sector companies. He is a member of the Arkansas Troop L Child Abduction Response Team and the FBI Task Force for Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking and a Reserve Pea Ridge Arkansas Police Officer. He has spoken at state and national conferences sharing his experiences, messages of hope and the call for continued training and growth.

Prior to founding Bertola Advisory Services, he worked for the California Highway Patrol for fifteen years, concluding in the Counter Terrorism and Threat Awareness Section as the lead statewide instructor for emergency messaging, the AMBER Alert and other missing person alerting.

Chris Hurst, OnSolve Vice President, Value Engineering, is responsible for ensuring the company's technology portfolio continues to anticipate and mitigate dynamic risks. Prior to his current role, Chris co-founded a risk intelligence company using machine learning to detect risks to operations and people with greater speed and relevance. Chris is a former Director of Enterprise Risk Management with Mercy Corps, Army Diver and Project Manager for large infrastructure projects with extensive experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Troy Harper is Vice President, Public Sector, at OnSolve, where he leads the company's Federal, State and Local Government operations, Public Utilities and Higher Education business efforts. Harper joined OnSolve in 2013, bringing more than 20 years of public safety and emergency management leadership. His career includes extensive planning, response and recovery activities for 12 federally declared disasters, weather emergencies, manmade incidents and wildfires, including one of Florida's most devastating wildfires. Harper also served as the appointed 911 Coordinator and managed a multi-jurisdictional Public Safety Operations Center.

He served in the U.S. Air Force and holds numerous federal and state certifications. His experiences with emergency management, law enforcement, fire rescue, public health and search-and-rescue bring a successful methodology and approach for resiliency to OnSolve.

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About OnSolve

OnSolve® is a leading critical event management provider that proactively mitigates physical threats, allowing organizations to remain agile when a crisis strikes. Using the most trusted expertise and reliable AI-powered risk intelligence, critical communications and incident management technology, the OnSolve Platform enables enterprises, SMB organizations and all levels of government to anticipate, detect and mitigate physical threats that impact their people, places and property.

With billions of alerts sent annually and proven support for both the public and private sectors, OnSolve is used by thousands of entities to save lives, protect communities, safeguard critical infrastructure and enable agility for the organizations that power our economy.

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