

INTRODUCTION

This guide explains how a governor may request a presidential declaration for an emergency or major disaster, and the types of federal disaster assistance that are available following a declaration.

Governors, their staff, as well as Congressional officials, will find this a useful reference guide on how the federal disaster assistance process works.

The mission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in supporting state, local, and tribal governments throughout all phases of emergency management, including disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Above all, FEMA strives to be survivor-centric in all aspects of its mission.

Working Together to Recover From Disasters

State, tribal, and local governments share the primary responsibility for protecting and helping their constituent recover from disasters.

In some cases, an emergency or disaster is beyond the capability of these governments to respond. In these instances, the governor may request federal disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), to supplement state, tribal, and local efforts to respond and recover from disaster impacts.

DID YOU KNOW?

Trials have two options when requesting federal disaster assistance. After an emergency or disaster occurs, federal recognized Indian tribes may seek federal assistance. Recent Stafford Act amendments provide tribes with the option of requesting a presidential declaration on their own, or being included in the state's request. This guide will not discuss the appropriate declaration process for federally recognized tribes. For more information, contact your FEMA regional office.

DECLARATION PROCESS



Helpful Links and Numbers

FEMA Website: www.fema.gov
FEMA Congressional Affairs
202-646-3500

FEMA Informational Affairs
202-646-3444

Registration for Disaster Assistance
• Phone: 800-621-FEMA (3624) or TTY: 800-462-7585 for the speech or hearing impaired
• Online: www.disasterassistance.gov

National Flood Insurance Program
• Phone: 800-379-9531
• Online: www.floodsmart.gov

U.S. Fire Administration
• Phone: 301-467-1000
• Online: www.usfa.fema.gov

Product of the FEMA Office of External Affairs



WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

Disasters can strike at any time. Governors and emergency managers work year-round to ensure their states are prepared and ready, in partnership with tribes and local communities, to respond to and recover from the impact of these events.

State emergency plans, community participation, and the sharing of resources through memoranda and memoranda of understanding are critical to ensuring state and local preparedness.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

There are three categories of disaster assistance available when requesting a presidential declaration of a major disaster:

Public Assistance Grant Program: Aid to state, tribal, and local governments and certain private non-profit organizations for emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities. This program may assist with debris removal and the repair of public infrastructure and public utilities.

Individual Assistance Grant Program: Aid to individuals and households that may include assistance with housing, personal property losses, transportation, medical, dental, funeral costs, and child care expenses. Other individual assistance includes crisis counseling, case management, employment, and legal services.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program: Funding for measures designed to reduce future losses to public and private property.

Not all forms of federal assistance are activated during every emergency or disaster. Programs are activated based on the impacts of the incident on the affected area, the needs determined during the disaster assessments, and the capability that exists within the state, tribal, or local community to assist in the recovery.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Public Assistance Program is an important source of emergency funds for disaster-damaged public facilities and infrastructure. The program provides assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, government-owned facilities such as schools and roads. Certain private non-profit facilities may also be eligible.

The Public Assistance Program encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing assistance for cost-effective hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.

Cost Share

FEMA generally funds 75 percent of eligible work. The state is responsible for 25 percent.

The President has the authority to increase the federal share in situations of severe impact. States requesting a presidential declaration may request an adjustment of the cost share.

What May Be Covered

- Debris removal
- Emergency protective measures (e.g., shoring, flooding, evacuation)
- Roads and bridges
- Water control facilities
- Buildings and equipment
- Utilities
- Parks and recreation



REQUESTING A DECLARATION

If it is apparent that a presidential disaster declaration may be necessary to assist in the response and/or recovery of the impacted area, the state emergency manager should contact their FEMA regional office and request a declaration.

POST-DISASTER HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides grants to state, tribal, and local governments and certain private non-profit organizations to implement cost-effective, long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration. While the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) programs are grant programs that provide mitigation funds before a disaster occurs, the purpose of the HMGP is to reduce the loss of life and damage to property due to disasters, and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery after a disaster.

HMGP grants are required to have at least a 25 percent non-federal cost share. The President does not have the authority to waive this cost share.

- Examples of Eligible HMGP Activities**
- Property acquisition
 - Structure elevation
 - Flood reduction projects
 - Infrastructure retrofit
 - Sea walls
 - Soil stabilization
 - Wildlife mitigation
 - Generators
 - Hazard mitigation planning
 - Management costs

A complete description of HMGP is available online at www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance. Technical assistance is available by contacting your FEMA regional office.

REVIEWING THE DECLARATION REQUEST

After a review of the governor's request, FEMA makes a recommendation to the President on the approval or denial of the disaster or emergency declaration. FEMA assesses a number of factors to determine the severity, magnitude, and impact of the disaster.

INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

Disaster Unemployment Assistance helps individuals who have lost work or become unemployed as a result of a major disaster, but who are not eligible for regular state unemployment insurance. If eligible, benefits start on the date of unemployment and can extend up to 26 weeks after the presidential disaster declaration date. All unemployed individuals must register with the state's employment services office.

FEMA delegated the responsibility of administering Disaster Unemployment Assistance to the Secretary of Labor. When the President authorizes Disaster Unemployment Assistance, state unemployment insurance agencies implement the program on behalf of the Department of Labor.

Disaster Legal Services

Disaster legal services can be available for low-income disaster survivors who have disaster-related legal needs. Free legal help is provided through the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association. Services include assistance with:

- Insurance claims
- Wills, power of attorney, and other legal papers lost in the disaster
- Assistance regarding home repair contracts or contractors
- Advice on problems with landlords
- Assistance regarding home repair contracts or contractors

Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program

The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program is a grant-based program, which funds community-based crisis counseling activities. Activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting disaster survivors with stress and anxiety mitigation
- Assisting disaster survivors with using or developing coping strategies
- Linking disaster survivors with other resources that may help in their recovery process

AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION

After a presidential declaration is issued, the state and FEMA sign an agreement that provides the terms of assistance. As the state learns more about the damage and other assistance that may be needed, the state must report information within

A QUICK CHECKLIST FOR GOVERNORS

Presidential Declaration Process:

- Execute your State Emergency Plan and carry out appropriate emergency response activities.

CONTACT FEMA REGIONAL OFFICES

Region I:
FEMA, Attn: NE, NEH, RI, VT
89 High Street
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 656-7556

Region II:
FEMA, Attn: NY, PE, CT, VT
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1357
New York, NY 10278-0002
(212) 680-8822
(877) 568-9643

Region III:
FEMA, Attn: DC, MD, PA, VA, WV
One Independence Mall, 6th Floor
415 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106-4404
(215) 951-5500

Region IV:
FEMA, Attn: AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN
3601 Chambers Lucker Road
Atlanta, GA 30344
(770) 220-5200

Region V:
FEMA, Attn: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI
330 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 608-5551

Region VI:
FEMA, Attn: AR, LA, OK, TX
Federal Regional Center
800 N. Loop West
Dallas, TX 75261-3698
(972) 708-5084

Region VII:
FEMA, Attn: IA, KS, MN, NE
9221 Wyndway Parkway, Ste. 300
Kansas City, MO 64114-3072
(816) 263-7500

Region VIII:
FEMA, Attn: CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY
Denver Federal Center
Building 740, Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-2527
(303) 235-8908

Region IX:
FEMA, Attn: AZ, CA, HI, NV, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607-0352
(510) 627-7500

Region X:
FEMA, Attn: AK, IT, OR, WA
Federal Regional Center
130 228th Street, S.W.
Bellevue, WA 98003-9796
(206) 467-4604

The Presidential Disaster Declaration Process

A Reference Guide for States



DID YOU KNOW?

The Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is a Congressional appropriation from which FEMA can draw upon to fund eligible response and recovery efforts associated with presidentially-declared major disasters and emergencies, pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Using DRF funds, FEMA can also direct other federal agencies to provide resources or conduct activities to assist with the response and recovery of a disaster. The DRF also funds Fire Management Assistance Grants, which are available to help respond to large wildfires.

