

# FAQ's – FEMA<sup>1</sup>

## What is FEMA?

FEMA is the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA can give disaster survivors money for temporary housing, housing repairs, housing replacement, and/or replacement of household items. **FEMA benefits are ONLY available if the President has declared an Individual Assistance disaster (not just a Fire Management disaster, which helps pay the costs of firefighting)**

## Am I eligible to obtain disaster housing assistance from FEMA?

To be eligible to receive disaster housing assistance from FEMA:

- You or someone who lives with you must be a United States citizen, qualified alien, or non-citizen national
- The place you live in must have been damaged or destroyed due to the disaster
- You must not have insurance or enough insurance to replace what you lost due to the disaster

## How do I register with FEMA?

You can register with FEMA at your nearest Disaster Recovery Center, by calling 1-800-621-FEMA, or by going online to [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)

You will need to give FEMA some information when you register. You can find out what you will need to tell FEMA you can read the Disaster Survivors Application Checklist (make it a hyperlink if possible) [disasterassistance.gov/get-assistance/application-checklist](http://disasterassistance.gov/get-assistance/application-checklist).

## Are there important deadlines for asking for help from FEMA?

Yes. Generally, the deadline to submit FEMA applications is 60 days after the President declares that there has been a disaster and survivors can apply for Individual Assistance. If you apply after that date you have to show that you had a good reason for missing the deadline.

To find out if the President has declared an Individual Assistance disaster, go to <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/>.

To check on the status of a FEMA application, go to <https://www.fema.gov/faq-details/Checking-status-of-FEMA-application>.

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<sup>1</sup> DLAC appreciates the hard work of Legal Aid of Sonoma County, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles (NLSLA), and Legal Services of Northern California for this information in this sheet.

### **What can I do if FEMA denied my request for assistance?**

If you have received a denial letter, you may appeal FEMA's decision within 60 days of the date of FEMA's decision. There will be more information about appealing on your denial letter. If you would like help appealing a FEMA denial, please contact your local legal aid. Legal aid organizations provide free legal assistance to people who qualify for their services. To search for a legal aid office near you, go to <https://lawhelpca.org/legal-directory>.

### **Where can I find more information about FEMA's programs for fire victims?**

If you have questions about FEMA you can find more information by going to [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or calling 1-800-621-FEMA.

### **Where can I get help with all this?**

To get legal help, search for a legal aid provider near you using this link: <https://lawhelpca.org/legal-directory>

Or find a local lawyer referral hotline by using this link: <https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Public/Need-Legal-Help/Lawyer-Referral-Service>

If the President has declared a disaster with Individual Assistance, then FEMA will open a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in the area affected by the disaster. The DRC will have tables staffed by FEMA, the Red Cross, Legal Aid, and many other groups there to help. To find out if an Individual Assistance Disaster has been declared, go to <https://www.fema.gov/disasters>. (If it only says "Fire Management Assistance," that means the President has not declared Individual Assistance disaster. That could still happen, but has not happened yet.

If the President HAS declared an Individual Assistance disaster, go to <https://egateway.fema.gov/ESF6/DRCLocator> to find a DRC near you.<sup>2</sup>

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