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News Release

Nonprofit Houses of Worship May Apply for FEMA Help

Deadline to Request Assistance from Hurricane Irma Damage is February 15

ORLANDO, Fla. – A FEMA policy update has made private nonprofit houses of worship eligible to apply for potential funding through the Public Assistance grant program to help with certain disaster-related costs.

The deadline for Florida houses of worship to submit a request for Hurricane Irma-related expenses is Thursday, Feb. 15.

Eligibility requirements for houses of worship

- To be an eligible applicant, a house of worship must:
 - Be owned or operated by a PNP organization.
 - Have damage or costs caused directly by Hurricane Irma in Florida between Sept. 4 and Oct. 18, 2017.
 - Be open to the general public.
 - For Permanent Work like repairs, the PNP may not have received funding or had insufficient funding after applying for a U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loan.
 - Provide a current ruling letter from the IRS granting tax exemption under Section 501 (c) (d) or (e) of the IRS Code of 1954 or be registered with the Florida Division of Corporations as an active charitable organization.

SBA disaster loans are a critical part of the application process

- FEMA may provide funding for Permanent Work—repairs, rebuilding or restoration—to houses of worship only if an SBA disaster loan does not cover them.
- FEMA provides financial assistance only if the SBA denies the house of worship a disaster loan or if the loan amount is insufficient to cover costs.

- Houses of worship may apply for an SBA loan online at www.sba.gov/disaster.
- However, FEMA does not consider a house of worship's application status with the SBA when determining eligibility for Emergency Work—debris removal and emergency protective measures. They may apply directly to FEMA for this help.

How to apply for FEMA help

- Houses of worship may submit a Request for Public Assistance online at www.floridapa.org through Thursday, Feb. 15.
- Houses of worship do not need to wait for an SBA decision to apply for FEMA help.

What is the Public Assistance grant program?

- Public Assistance provides grants to state, tribal, territorial and local governments and certain types of private nonprofit—PNP—organizations so communities can quickly respond to and recover from presidentially-declared disasters or emergencies.
- The Public Assistance program is funded by FEMA on a cost-share basis and administered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management.
- FEMA provides supplemental federal disaster grant assistance, typically 75 percent reimbursement of eligible costs for Emergency Work—debris removal and life-saving emergency protective measures—and Permanent Work—repair, replacement or restoration of certain disaster-damaged facilities.
- Eligible debris removal is limited to that associated with an eligible facility.
- Eligible emergency protective measures are generally limited to activities associated with preventing damage to an eligible facility and its contents.
- FEMA does not reimburse PNPs for costs associated with emergency services like sheltering and feeding. The agency may only reimburse local governments that organized these services.
- PNP operating costs are generally ineligible even if they're emergency services.

FEMA's mission 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.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

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