

Five Things to Know About FEMA, Federal and Nonprofit Support to the California Wildfires Response

Release Date: January 11, 2025

WASHINGTON -- As state, local and federal responders continue efforts to save lives, homes and public property in the areas affected by the wildfires, residents should remain vigilant as conditions are still dangerous and [severely degraded air quality in Los Angeles county poses a threat to residents](#). Follow instructions from local officials and evacuate immediately if told to do so.

Los Angeles County Residents Can Apply for FEMA Assistance

FEMA understands that you may not have all of your personal documents with you or that they may have been lost in the fires. To apply for assistance, you only need:

- Names of everyone living in your home at the time of the fires.
- Social Security number (yours or your child's).
- Household income.
- Contact information.
- Information of property damage/emergency needs.

If you have insurance, you should file a claim as soon as possible. FEMA assistance is available to help jumpstart your recovery if you have uninsured or underinsured damage. If insurance does not cover all your damage, FEMA may provide additional help. There are three ways to apply:

- Online at DisasterAssistance.gov and in Spanish language at DisasterAssistance.gov/es.
- Calling the FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-3362 for assistance in multiple languages.
- On the [FEMA App](#) for mobile devices.



FEMA

Page 1 of 3

To view an accessible video about how to apply visit: [FEMA Accessible: Registering for Individual Assistance - YouTube](#).

Applying for FEMA Assistance Is a Process

After applying for assistance, you will receive a letter from FEMA by mail or email and you can find it on your [DisasterAssistance.gov](#) account, based on the preference you indicated when you applied. The letter will explain whether FEMA has found you eligible for assistance, how much and how the assistance must be used.

In some cases, you may receive a letter stating you are “not approved” for help from FEMA. While this may seem like a denial, you may still be eligible for FEMA assistance. Oftentimes, survivors are “not approved” because FEMA needs additional information to make a determination. The letter will explain the reason for the initial decision. Read the letter carefully. The fastest way to submit additional documents is to upload to your disaster assistance account at [DisasterAssistance.gov](#).

State and Local Governments May Receive 100% Reimbursement for Emergency Work

President Biden approved the 100% cost share for Public Assistance Categories A and B for 180 days. This means that FEMA will fund 100% of the cost of debris removal and lifesaving and life sustaining activities the state and local governments take—including fire suppression efforts—as they work to save lives.

The assistance FEMA provides through its [Public Assistance Program](#) is subject to a federal cost share, normally 75%, which means that FEMA provides funding for a portion of the project and the state, territory, local government or nonprofit is responsible for the remaining portion.

For debris removal and emergency protective measures specifically, the federal cost share may be increased in limited circumstances, and for limited periods of time, as with the California wildfires and a number of other major disasters.



Disaster Response Is a Whole of Government Effort

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a [public health emergency for California](#), providing health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility to meet emergency health needs of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

The U.S. Department of Defense is providing firefighting personnel and capabilities as well as Navy helicopters with water delivery buckets to assist with aerial fire suppression.

Anyone feeling overwhelmed or in distress because of the fires can call or text the Disaster Distress Helpline 24/7 at **1-800-985-5990** to receive free crisis counseling.

State and nonprofit partners like the American Red Cross and others are providing a safe place to stay, meals and emotional comfort to people. To find a shelter, text SHELTER and your ZIP code to 43362, visit [redcross.org/shelter](https://www.redcross.org/shelter) or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767). You can also call this number if you need assistance locating a missing loved one because of the fires.

People Can Help Affected Communities Recover

Financial contributions to [recognized disaster relief organizations](#) are the fastest, most flexible and most effective method of donating. Organizations on the ground know what items and quantities are needed, often buy in bulk with discounts and, if possible, purchase through businesses local to the disaster, which supports economic recovery.

People can connect with [trusted organizations](#) operating in the affected area to know where volunteers are needed.

