

Equity Drives FEMA Response and Recovery Efforts in Tornado-Damaged Areas in Kentucky

Release Date: December 16, 2021

WASHINGTON -- FEMA continues working with federal, commonwealth, local as well as non-governmental agencies to support needs of survivors affected by the recent tornado outbreak in Kentucky.

The agency is working to remove barriers to assistance, ensuring all survivors have equal access to disaster aid and resources.

“Disasters affect individuals and communities differently,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “We’ve committed ourselves to putting people first by improving response operations and implementing new program initiatives that reduce barriers to access and deliver equitable outcomes for all survivors. We must continue to work across government and reach communities where they are to ensure survivors have the resources they need to recover.”

FEMA recently announced a series of amendments to its Individual Assistance program to reduce access barriers experienced by underserved populations and provide greater flexibility to survivors. These reforms include:

- FEMA is now providing financial assistance to applicants for the cost of real property needs (limited to wheelchair ramp, grab bars and a paved path) due to a disaster-caused disability, when these items were not present in the home before the disaster.
- Financial assistance may be available to applicants with disaster damage that did not cause their home to be unlivable to clean and sanitize their home to prevent additional losses and protect the health and safety of the household.
- FEMA is also providing financial assistance to repair real property components impacted by disaster-caused mold growth.
- FEMA and SBA recently launched a pilot program to lower the income threshold for some types of FEMA assistance, enabling eligible low-income



applicants to receive assistance earlier in their recovery process.

“We at FEMA have leaned forward with Kentucky and continue to do so, recognizing that there are a lot of critical needs that need to be met,” said Marcus Coleman, who leads faith-based and neighborhood partners for FEMA. “We’re going to make sure that we have the right partners and plans in place to help support what we know to be a very long recovery. This neighbor-to-neighbor response is a critically important component to starting the recovery process.”

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are going door-to-door in hard-hit neighborhoods helping survivors apply for assistance. [These teams are working with commonwealth and local emergency managers to identify and conduct targeted outreach to underserved communities.](#) These teams provide information on aid and resources available from federal and state governments, nonprofit organizations and the faith community to help address immediate needs.

No one’s background or primary language is a barrier to receiving FEMA financial assistance. FEMA offers help in 75 languages available through our call centers to assist caseworkers and processing staff to provide customer service to non-English speaking applicants.

FEMA is providing timely translation of information and resources into Spanish and other languages identified in Kentucky. Disaster assistance information is available in Arabic, Chinese, German, Korean, Serbo-Croatian and Vietnamese. Translation services for additional languages are also available as requested and needed.

“We provide translation services to make sure that the assistance that’s available is available in Spanish and in bilingual formats in multiple languages, based on the assessments of the county,” said Coleman. “In addition, we are supporting many of our faith-based and community-based partners ... who are going to continue to be tremendous assets to engage these communities. We’re also bringing in personnel who have some experience working directly with Hispanic and Latino communities and making sure that we are using data to inform our outreach in a way that honors and respects this community.”

If your full-time home was damaged by the recent storms and tornadoes and not in a safe, sanitary and functioning condition you may be eligible for federal



disaster assistance. If you apply with FEMA for disaster assistance and have insurance, you must also file a claim with your insurance company.

FEMA disaster assistance is not the same as insurance. It cannot make you whole, but it can offer a helping hand. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may be eligible for assistance. FEMA assistance may include money for rental assistance, essential home repairs, personal property losses and other serious disaster-related needs not covered by insurance.

The fastest way for survivors to begin their application is to visit www.DisasterAssistance.gov. Other resources are available at FEMA.gov.

