

Questions and Answers on COFA Eligibility for FEMA Benefits

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President Biden recently signed a package of spending bills that included the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024. Under this change of law, COFA citizens who were affected by the August wildfires on Maui are now eligible to apply for FEMA disaster assistance and other federal benefits. Among them are citizens of the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Q. What FEMA program can I apply for and what are the possible benefits?

A. You may apply for assistance under FEMA's Individuals and Households program. These benefits may address a range of serious needs, including funeral expenses, temporary housing, replacement of essential personal property, and disaster-related medical, dental, transportation, moving-and-storage and childcare expenses.

Q. I lost my home in the wildfires and moved off Maui to find another place to live. Am I still eligible to apply for FEMA assistance?

A. Yes. You are eligible to apply for FEMA disaster assistance if you can show that you legally resided in the United States, your primary residence was on Maui and you had damage or losses from the Aug. 8 wildfires. It does not matter where you sheltered after the fires.

Q. COFA citizens are applying for disaster assistance later than other wildfire survivors. Is that going to affect our benefits?

A. No. Applicant benefits are considered on a case-by-case basis. The assistance received by COFA citizens will be based on their eligible losses – the same as any other applicant.



FEMA

Q. Several months ago, FEMA provided my family with assistance because my child, who was born in Hawai'i, was eligible for disaster assistance. As the head of household, do I need to apply again in my own name?

A. No. You do not need to apply again. Your family needs only one FEMA application.

Q. When I apply for FEMA disaster assistance, what documents am I going to need?

A. To demonstrate COFA status, COFA citizens may show either a valid, unexpired Micronesia, Marshall Islands or Palauan passport, a Micronesia Social Security card, a birth certificate, an admission stamp in their passports, or an I-94 form, or I-9 form issued by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol.

- For additional documentation required of COFA citizens, visit [Resources for Citizens of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands](#). Palau citizens can also refer to [Fact Sheet: Status of Citizens of the Republic of Palau \(uscis.gov\)](#).
- COFA citizens may also visit the Federal States of Micronesia Consulate on O'ahu or call the consulate at **808-836-4775** for more information.

Q. How can I apply for FEMA assistance?

A. To apply, COFA citizens may call **808-784-1952** or visit the Lahaina Disaster Recovery Center in the Civic Center Gymnasium at 1840 Honoapi'ilani Highway. Phone lines and recovery center hours are **8 a.m. to 4 p.m. HST Monday to Friday; 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. HST Saturday; closed Sundays.**

Q. Is there someone at the Disaster Recovery Center who can help me in my own language?

A. Yes. Interpreters at the recovery center can help you in many languages, including Marshallese, Chuukese, Kosraean, Palauan, Carolinian, Chamorro and American Sign Language.

For the latest information on the Maui wildfire recovery efforts, visit [mauicounty.gov](#), [mauirecovers.org](#), [fema.gov/disaster/4724](#) and [Hawaii Wildfires - YouTube](#). Follow FEMA on social media: [@FEMARegion9](#) and [facebook.com/fema](#). You may also get disaster assistance information and download applications at [sba.gov/hawaii-wildfires](#).

