

FEMA Provides Alternatives for Verifying Proof of Ownership in Puerto Rico

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico – FEMA is exhausting all options in its home ownership verification process to help Puerto Rico disaster survivors for whom proof of ownership is slowing their recovery.

By law, FEMA must require proof of ownership and occupancy from disaster survivors who apply for federal assistance to help with repairs to their damaged homes.

FEMA verifies ownership through inspection, automated public and government records or submitted documents such as:

- Deed, title or lease.
- Bill of sale or land installment contract.
- Mortgage payment booklet, property tax receipt or property tax bill.
- Last will and testament (along with a death certificate) naming applicant heir to the property.
- Real property structure insurance.

Applicants who need legal assistance regarding home ownership documentation and cannot afford an attorney may call the free Disaster Legal Services hotline at [800-310-7029](tel:800-310-7029). They will ask for the survivor's contact information and assign an attorney. Assistance is available in Spanish and English.

When all forms of verification are destroyed or don't exist, FEMA may accept a signed self-declaration. The self-declaration must include the length of time the applicant has lived at the disaster-damaged location and an explanation of circumstances that prevent standard verification. If the declaration is not ready by the time of the inspection, it may be uploaded to the applicant's online FEMA account at DisasterAssistance.gov or delivered in person to a disaster recovery center. To locate the nearest center, visit FEMA.gov/DRC.



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If home ownership or occupancy cannot be proved, some individuals or families may still qualify for other available disaster assistance to cover damaged or destroyed personal property.

For additional information or questions, call the FEMA Helpline at **800-621-FEMA (3362)** (voice, 711 or Video Relay Service), TTY: **800-462-7585** (press 2 for Spanish). Lines are open 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

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