



## Public Assistance

### Building back better

Disasters can have devastating impacts on a community's economic, social, and environmental well-being. Since disasters can be repeat events, it's especially important that communities consider ways to rebuild to avoid future disaster damage.

Communities play a key role in reducing risk by applying an understanding of local hazards to risk reduction planning. These efforts are most effective when implemented consistently with risk reduction priorities identified at the community-level.

FEMA's Public Assistance Program can assist communities become more resilient by funding:

- Measures to protect a damaged facility against future damage,
- Restoration of facilities to local codes and standards,
- Hazard-resistant design provisions of the International Code Council's building codes for buildings that have sustained significant damage, and
- Relocation of some facilities outside hazard-prone areas.

### Is it worth it?

Hazard mitigation can help reduce costs by:

- Breaking the disaster-rebuild-disaster cycle,
- Strengthening existing infrastructure, and
- Reducing down time for businesses and critical public facilities and services.

A National Institute of Building Science study found that every dollar spent on hazard mitigation produces a four dollar return on investment in future disaster savings. Since communities share a portion of the cost associated with disaster recovery, hazard mitigation can lessen the financial burden of future disaster recovery for both FEMA and

communities. Risk reduction will also limit the financial impacts on communities in smaller disasters when FEMA is not involved. [For more information:](http://www.nibs.org/?page=mmc_projects#nhms)  
[http://www.nibs.org/?page=mmc\\_projects#nhms](http://www.nibs.org/?page=mmc_projects#nhms).



Government building outfitted with storm panels that can withstand winds up to 120 mph.

### What can Public Assistance offer?

#### Public Assistance mitigation funding:

Public Assistance can provide funding to mitigate future disaster damage. This is commonly referred to as Section 406 Mitigation. In order to be eligible for Section 406 Mitigation, the mitigation activity must be associated with the disaster damage, reduce the risk of future damage to the facility, and be cost effective.

The FEMA Public Assistance Program Delivery Manager will help Applicants identify potential Section 406 Mitigation opportunities.

#### Local codes and standards:

Generally, Public Assistance will fund upgrades to meet local building codes. To be eligible for upgrades, codes and standards must:

- Apply to the type of repair or restoration to the facility,
- Be appropriate to the pre-disaster use of the facility,
- Be reasonable, formally adopted in writing, and in effect at the time of the disaster, and

- Apply uniformly to all similar types of facilities.

### **Minimum standards for buildings:**

Buildings that sustain a high-level of damage may be eligible for upgrades that meet the hazard-resistant design provisions of the International Code Council's building, residential, and existing building codes, and the American Society of Civil Engineers Standard 24. Applicants do not have to prove cost effectiveness or have adopted the International Code Council's codes to receive funding. For more information on required minimum standards, [see pages 93-94 of the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide: https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781](https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781).

### **Relocations:**

FEMA can authorize and fund the relocation of a facility out of a hazard-prone area when it has sustained repetitive and heavy damage, is not prohibited by law, and has been shown to be cost-effective. For more information on relocation, [see page 104 of the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide: https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781](https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781).

### **Who can get FEMA assistance?**

If you are an eligible applicant (i.e., State, Tribal, Territorial, or Local Government or certain private non-profits) and have a permanent work project (e.g., roads, bridges, water control facilities, buildings and equipment, utilities, park and recreation facilities) your facility may be eligible for Section 406 Mitigation funding, to repair/rebuild to local codes and standards, to repair/rebuild buildings to hazard-resistant design provisions of the International Code Council code, or for relocation away from the hazard-prone area.

If your community is interested in hazard mitigation for undamaged facilities not eligible for Public Assistance funding you may still be eligible for a hazard mitigation grant through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program delivered through your state.

More information [can be found here: https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program](https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program). You may also contact your state or local official designated [point of contact available here: https://www.fema.gov/state-hazard-mitigation-officers](https://www.fema.gov/state-hazard-mitigation-officers).

### **How can I learn more?**

If you are not familiar with what types of mitigation projects have proven effective in your area or for similar types of facilities, reach out to your state, tribal, or local colleagues. Additionally, you can:

- Talk with your FEMA Program Delivery Manager about any ideas you have, to ask specific questions, or to get ideas for mitigation opportunities.
- Talk to your state or local code officials, engineers, or design professionals to learn what codes apply to your facility, especially buildings.
- [Go to https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning](https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning) website to find resources associated with mitigation planning.
- Learn what others are doing in [FEMA's Mitigation Best Practices Portfolio: https://www.fema.gov/mitigation-best-practices-portfolio](https://www.fema.gov/mitigation-best-practices-portfolio)
- Obtain phone support when using FEMA Building Science technical guidance: (866) 927-2104.

Through these activities and the Public Assistance Program's work across the country, communities are able to incorporate mitigation into rebuilding infrastructure after disaster strikes.



Enlarged culvert and added inlet walls to focus water flow away from roadway.