

American Samoa Earthquake, Tsunami, and Flooding – FEMA-1859-DR

Declared September 29, 2009

On September 29, 2009, Governor Tigiola T.A. Tulafona requested an expedited major disaster declaration due to earthquake, tsunami, and flooding beginning on September 29, 2009, and continuing. The Governor requested a declaration for Individual Assistance, Public Assistance Categories A and B (debris removal and emergency protective measures), and Hazard Mitigation for all islands in the Territory of American Samoa. The Governor further requested direct Federal Assistance. This event was of the severity and magnitude that the need for supplemental Federal assistance was determined to be necessary prior to the completion of joint Federal, State, and local Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs). Per 44 C.F.R. § 206.33 (d) and § 206.36(d), the requirement for a joint PDA may be waived for those incidents of such unusual severity and magnitude that formal field damage assessments are not required to establish the need for supplemental Federal assistance under the Stafford Act.¹

On September 29, 2009, President Obama declared that a major disaster exists in the Territory of American Samoa. This declaration made Individual Assistance requested by the Governor available to affected individuals and households in the Territory of American Samoa. This declaration also made Public Assistance Categories A and B requested by the Governor available to State and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work in response to the earthquake, tsunami, and flooding in the Territory of American Samoa. Direct Federal assistance also was authorized. Finally, this declaration made Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance requested by the Governor available for hazard mitigation measures to all islands in the Territory of American Samoa.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance –

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ N/A
 - Destroyed - -
 - Major Damage - -
 - Minor Damage - -
 - Affected - -
- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ -
- Percentage of low income households:⁵ -
- Percentage of elderly households:⁶ -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: N/A

Public Assistance –

- Primary Impact: N/A
- Total Public Assistance cost estimate: -

- Statewide per capita impact:⁷ -
- Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.31
- Countywide per capita impact: -
- Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$3.28

¹ The preliminary damage assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor's request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor's request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor's request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA's regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(5)).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁶ Ibid (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2000 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.