

MEMA and FEMA Disaster Teams in Neighborhoods Helping Mississippi Storm Survivors

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HATTIESBURG, Miss. -- State and federal disaster survivor assistance teams are working in storm damaged neighborhoods helping Mississippians recover from the January tornadoes. Additionally, housing inspectors contracted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency will visit with residents at their homes to review/document the damage.

The teams, made up of disaster specialists from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and FEMA, are canvassing affected areas in the four designated counties of Forrest, Lamar, Lauderdale and Perry. This will give residents an opportunity to register for disaster assistance and teams can quickly address immediate and emerging needs. They can also provide application updates and referrals to additional resources for unmet needs.

Always ask for federal or state photo identification before providing any personal information. Also remember MEMA and FEMA staff will never ask you for money.

Registration

Survivors are asked to register for assistance online at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362** or **(TTY) 800-462-7585**. Helpline hours are 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. local time, seven days a week until further notice.

Applying for disaster assistance is a two-step process that ensures consideration for all FEMA programs and disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, or SBA. This assistance may include:

- Grants to rent a new place to live temporarily as needed.
- Grants for essential home repairs not covered by insurance.



- Grants for serious disaster-related needs not covered by insurance — such as medical, dental, transportation, funeral expenses, moving and storage fees, personal property loss and child care.
- Low-interest disaster loans from SBA to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes to cover losses not fully compensated by insurance.

Housing Inspection

Following registration, a housing inspector will contact you and schedule an appointment to visit your home. When they arrive for the meeting, the FEMA-contracted inspectors will display official contractor photo identification. If the photo ID is not visible, it is important that you ask to see it. This helps prevent fraud. If you suspect someone is posing as an inspector or other official, please contact local law enforcement.

FEMA's contracted housing inspectors verify disaster damage; they do not need to document all damage. They ask about damage to the structure and building systems and major appliances, and they enter the information electronically. Inspectors do not determine your eligibility for assistance.

An inspection generally requires 20-45 minutes to complete the assessment. To help speed the process, you should:

- Keep your appointment or notify the inspector if a postponement is necessary.
- Tell the inspector about other property losses or disaster-related needs such as transportation, medical or dental care, tools and equipment required by an employer (if not self-employed) and educational materials, so inspectors can relay the information to FEMA.
- If possible, provide photos that can support the damage claims, at the time of inspection.

What to expect from inspectors:

- They already have your FEMA registration number and will never ask for it.
- They never require banking or other personal information.
- They do not hire or endorse specific contractors to repair homes or recommend repairs.



Homeowners are asked to show proof of ownership such as a tax bill, deed, mortgage payment receipt or insurance policy with the applicant's name, and the damaged property's address on the documentation. Renters must show proof of occupancy, a lease, rent payment receipt, utility bill or another document confirming the location was their primary residence at the time of the disaster. Both homeowners and renters must provide a valid driver's license or other photo identification.

If you have a communication-related disability, you may request reasonable accommodations to aid in communication. For instance, you may request an American Sign Language interpreter. Accommodations can be requested by contacting (770) 241-5525 or (800) 621-3362.

For more information on Mississippi's tornado recovery, go to fema.gov/disaster/4295 or visit the MEMA site at msema.org. Follow MEMA on Facebook facebook.com/msemaorg and on Twitter @msema.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

All FEMA disaster assistance will be provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), religion, national origin, age, disability, limited English proficiency, economic status, or retaliation. If you believe your civil rights are being violated, call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585(TTY/TDD).

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

