

FEMA Awards Pinellas County More Than \$3.9 Million for Upgraded Traffic Signals

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ORLANDO, Fla. – Pinellas County will receive more than \$3.9 million in federal grant money to upgrade traffic lights at 16 locations from lights hanging on wires to more wind-resistant ones mounted on metal mast arms.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has approved \$3,906,317 to help fund the upgrades throughout the Pinellas County. The project will replace the span wires, concrete pole structures, and associated underground infrastructure with new mast arm structures. This will provide protection against 150 MPH winds or the wind speed protection and impact requirements indicated by the effective Florida Building Code at the time permits are issued.

Funding for this HMGP project is authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Act, the 1988 law that governs FEMA's disaster-related activities.

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is an important source of federal disaster assistance. HMGP funds may become available following the president's declaration of a major disaster, and help strengthen communities by improving buildings, facilities and infrastructure that people use every day. A 2018 report from the National Institute of Building Sciences found that one dollar spent on hazard mitigation will save more than six dollars of recovery and rebuilding costs.

Generally, HMGP may provide a state, tribe or territory with additional grants up to 15 percent of the total disaster grants awarded by FEMA for a federally-declared disaster. States such as Florida that meet higher mitigation planning criteria may qualify for a higher percentage.

Florida has a FEMA-approved Enhanced Mitigation Plan, making the state eligible for HMGP funding not to exceed 20 percent of the estimated total amount of money spent by FEMA on disaster grants in the Hurricane Irma disaster. From this



amount, HMGP reimburses the state up to 75 percent of eligible costs for mitigation projects. The remaining amount comes from other sources such as state and local assets and a combination of cash and in-kind sources.



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