

FEMA Approves \$3.3 Million in Hazard Mitigation Grants for Bay and Jackson Counties

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PENSACOLA, Fla. — FEMA has approved two hazard mitigation grants totaling more than \$3.3 million to strengthen the resiliency of critical facilities in Bay and Jackson counties following Hurricane Michael.

Funding from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) will provide:

- **Bay County:** \$1,953,899 for the installation of redundant fiber optic connections to ensure reliable communications for 93 critical facilities and programs – including 911 radio towers, law enforcement, fire stations and the government administration building – and 126 traffic signals throughout the county to enable efficient traffic flow during the evacuation and return of residents following any disaster. This project will also add fiber optic redundancy to many non-county facilities including Bay District Schools and the city fire and police departments of Lynn Haven, Panama City, Panama City Beach and Springfield.
- **Jackson County:** \$1,347,363 to purchase and install permanent diesel generators at 17 critical facilities throughout the county. Installation will include a concrete pad and an automatic transfer switch at each location, which will ensure the continuous delivery of electrical power from either a power company or a generator during future power outages. The permanent generators will be protected from flooding and wind.

The HMGP is an important source of federal disaster assistance. Program funding may become available after the president declares a major disaster, with a goal of strengthening communities by improving buildings and critical infrastructure. A 2018 report by the National Institute of Building Sciences found that one dollar spent on hazard mitigation saves more than six dollars of recovery and rebuilding costs.



Generally, the 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 advanced 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 grant money spent by FEMA in the Hurricane Michael disaster. From this amount, the HMGP reimburses the state up to 75 percent of eligible costs for hazard mitigation projects. The remaining amount comes from other sources such as state and local assets and a combination of cash and in-kind sources.

