

Must I Be a U.S. Citizen to Get FEMA Help?

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As New Mexicans recover from recent wildfires, many residents are wondering if they can qualify for FEMA disaster assistance if they are not United States citizens. Some may make assumptions based on rumors and may avoid seeking federal help, even though it may be available to them.

Non-Citizens May Be Eligible

FEMA is committed to helping all eligible New Mexico residents recover from the wildfires and straight-line winds beginning on April 5 and continuing. These include:

- U.S. citizens,
- Non-citizen nationals, (someone who is a permanent resident card holder) and
- Qualified undocumented immigrant

A qualified undocumented immigrant is a lawful permanent resident. It could also be someone with legal status for reasons which may include asylum, refugee, parole, withholding of deportation and Cuban/Haitian entrants.

Adults who do not meet the citizenship or immigration status at the time of application may still apply for certain forms of assistance if: another adult household member is a citizen; or if the household has a minor child who was born in the United States and has a Social Security number.

- The Social Security Administration can help you get a Social Security number for your child or find information online at ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10023.pdf.
- A minor child must have lived with the parent or guardian applying on their behalf since April 5, 2022, the date of the onset of the disaster. The parent or guardian must register as the co-applicant.



- Individuals may consult an immigration expert to verify if they meet the immigration status requirements for FEMA disaster assistance.

How to Register with FEMA

If you meet these eligibility criteria and live in one of the five counties that are eligible for federal assistance, you may complete an application for FEMA Individuals and Households Program assistance. The designated counties for FEMA Individual Assistance are Colfax, Lincoln, Mora, San Miguel and Valencia.

The fastest and easiest way to apply is by visiting disasterassistance.gov/.

If it is not possible to apply online, call 800-621-3362. The toll-free telephone lines operate from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. MDT seven days a week. If you use a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA the number for that service.

Other Programs and Volunteer Agencies

Other individual assistance programs are available, regardless of citizenship status.

Voluntary organizations offer help regardless of citizenship status. To find voluntary organizations in your county:

- Call the American Red Cross at 800-733-2767 or visit [local American Red Cross chapter](#) for information about your local Red Cross chapter.
- Those affected by the fires who need assistance should call the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management at 800-432-2080.
- Dial 2-1-1 from any phone to find your local [United Way](#) or visit 211.org to find the phone number for the service in your area.
- To learn about help available from other state and local volunteer agencies, visit New Mexico Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at <https://www.nmvoad.org>.



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