

Houses of Worship in Georgia May Be Eligible for FEMA Assistance

Release Date: September 27, 2023

ATLANTA— Houses of worship and other private nonprofit organizations may be eligible for FEMA assistance to help reimburse costs for emergency protective measures, debris removal and restoration of facilities damaged by Hurricane Idalia on Aug. 30, 2023. Houses of Worship are considered private nonprofit organizations that provide a noncritical, essential social service, such as community and senior citizen centers.

FEMA's Public Assistance program may provide financial assistance to certain private nonprofit organizations – including houses of worship – to restore facilities damaged or destroyed in this disaster. The federal share for Public Assistance projects is not less than 75 percent of the eligible cost. The state determines how the non-federal share of the cost of a project (up to 25 percent) is split with the sub-recipients such as houses of worship.

Eligibility Requirements for Houses of Worship

- Be located within one of these Georgia counties: **Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Colquitt, Cook, Echols, Emanuel, Glynn, Jeff Davis, Jenkins, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Screven, Tattnall, Thomas, Tift, Ware, or Wayne**, and experienced property damage caused by Hurricane Idalia.
- Provide a current ruling letter from the IRS granting tax exemption under Section 501 (c) (d) or (e) of the IRS Code of 1954, or documentation from the Georgia Secretary of State indicating nonprofit status.
- Provide proof of ownership or lease documents which establishes whose legal responsibility it is to repair damage.
- Eligible applicants must first apply to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for a low-interest disaster loan before FEMA can determine if the



organization is eligible for assistance.

SBA Disaster Loans are a Critical Part of the Application Process

- FEMA will provide financial assistance only if the house of worship is denied an SBA loan - or if the loan authorized is insufficient to cover repair costs.
- FEMA may only provide funding for eligible “Permanent Work” costs not covered by an SBA disaster loan.
 - Permanent work includes, but is not limited to, roads, bridges, dams, reservoirs, levees, floodwalls and other water-control facilities, as well as buildings and equipment.
 - Permanent Work usually must be completed within 18-months from the date of disaster declaration, which President Biden signed on Sept. 7, 2023, unless an extension is authorized.

The first step is to submit a Request for Public Assistance (RPA), which needs to happen by Oct. 7, 2023, for Cook, Glynn, and Lowndes counties. The RPA deadline is Oct. 9, 2023, for Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Colquitt, Echols, Emanuel, Jeff Davis, Jenkins, Lanier, Pierce, Screven, Tattnall, Thomas, Tift, Ware, and Wayne counties. For more information on submitting a Request for Public Assistance (RPA), visit www.fema.gov/assistance/public/apply. Applicants should also contact their county emergency manager, Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) or email publicassistance@gema.ga.gov.

For the latest information on Georgia’s recovery from Hurricane Idalia, visit fema.gov/disaster/4738, follow FEMA on X, formerly known as Twitter, at twitter.com/femaregion4 and at facebook.com/fema.

