

Serious Needs Assistance

Serious Needs Assistance is money received upfront to help survivors pay for expenses related to a disaster, such as food, water, baby formula and other emergency supplies.

Based on feedback received from disaster survivors, impacted communities, and stakeholders, FEMA made changes to Individual Assistance to cut red tape and expand eligibility to reach more people and help them build back stronger. These changes apply to disasters declared on or after March 22, 2024.

Serious Needs Assistance is a new type of assistance and counts toward the maximum amount of Other Needs Assistance you can receive. The following information explains this new form of assistance.

What is Serious Needs Assistance?

Serious Needs Assistance is a flexible, upfront payment that can be used to pay for emergency supplies like water, food, first aid, breast-feeding supplies, infant formula, diapers, personal hygiene items, or fuel for transportation. It is available in all disasters declared for Individual Assistance.

Who can get Serious Needs Assistance?

You may get Serious Needs Assistance if:

- You or someone in your home is a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien,
- FEMA can confirm your identity,
- Your home is in a declared disaster area,
- You live in your home most of the year,
- You apply for FEMA assistance while Serious Needs Assistance is available, and
- There is disaster damage to your home. FEMA confirms this based on an inspection or documents you send.



How much Serious Needs Assistance can I get?

FEMA gives Serious Needs Assistance as an upfront payment of \$770 per household. The award amount is adjusted each Fiscal Year.

Is Serious Needs Assistance the ONLY assistance I can get?

No. Serious Needs Assistance is meant to provide help with essential needs while you begin your recovery. Serious Needs Assistance does not disqualify you from receiving other assistance from FEMA.

Do I need to pay FEMA back for Serious Needs Assistance?

No. FEMA Serious Needs Assistance does NOT have to be paid back.



FEMA

When can I get Serious Needs Assistance?

Serious Needs Assistance is available for survivors who apply during the first 30 days after a disaster is declared. FEMA can extend this time to 60 days in response to a written request from the impacted state, territory, or Tribal Nation.

I need help before my inspection, can I get Serious Needs Assistance faster?

Yes. FEMA may give survivors in the hardest hit areas Serious Needs Assistance before their inspection. If you don't get a faster payment because FEMA isn't able to confirm your information, you may still be able to receive Serious Needs Assistance after your inspection.

I didn't get Serious Needs Assistance after my inspection. Can I still get help?

Yes. If you applied while Serious Needs Assistance is available, but didn't get help after your inspection, FEMA will send a letter that explains what information you may need to show to get help.

You may need to send more information about:

- Your identity or where you live, or
- The repairs or clean up needed because of disaster damage to your home.

I have insurance and haven't had a FEMA inspection. Can I still get help?

Yes. You can still get Serious Needs Assistance by sending FEMA your insurance information or by showing FEMA the repairs or clean up you did or need to do because of disaster damage to your home.

You may need to send more information about:

- Any receipts or estimates from contractors or service providers to repair disaster damage, or
- Documents from your landlord about disaster damages to your home.

I don't agree with FEMA's decision. How can I appeal?

If you don't agree with FEMA's decision, you can appeal by showing why you need FEMA assistance. The decision letter you get from FEMA will have more information about the types of documents you should send.

You may use an optional Appeal Request form, which is included in the decision letter you receive from FEMA. You can also choose to write and sign a letter to send with your documents to help FEMA understand why you need help.

How can I send documents?

You can send supporting documents to FEMA by:

- Uploading to your disaster assistance account at DisasterAssistance.gov.
- Mailing to FEMA, P.O. Box 10055, Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055.
- Faxing to 1-800-827-8112.
- Visiting a Disaster Recovery Center, if available.