

FEMA Approves \$1.1 Million Grant for Panama City Beach Utility Mitigation Project

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PENSACOLA, Fla. – FEMA has approved a grant of \$1,102,418 for the city of Panama City Beach to study a proposal to convert existing overhead utility and communication lines to underground facilities along Front Beach Road between Lullwater Drive and Crane Street. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) will fund the study, which will include surveying, engineering, design, planning and the bidding for the suggested work.

Once approved, the project would include the planned removal of sections of the existing roadway or sidewalk, the digging of an underground trench, installation of the electrical and communication lines, restoring the local power connections and re-installing the roadway and sidewalk.

When completed, the project will provide long-term protection for the underground lines and, in turn, the community from the direct impact of severe storm events, including flooding.

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



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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.

