

FEMA Grant Helps Expedite Building Permit Process in Tennessee Town

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. —In the aftermath of the deadly flooding that occurred in Waverly, Tenn. in August 2021, Larry Lescure, the town's Code Enforcement Director, wasn't sure how he was going to take on the task of inspecting hundreds of damaged homes by himself.

"I'm just a one-man band," said Lescure, a Waverly police officer for 30 years before he took on the job as building code manager. "If it weren't for the FEMA grant, we wouldn't be this far along in the rebuilding process."

The town of Waverly is the second community in the country to benefit from a recent policy providing communities with resources needed to effectively administer and enforce building code and floodplain management. Section 1206 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 authorized FEMA funding to increase the overall speed of recovery and enhance compliance with state and locally adopted building codes and floodplain management ordinances.

Under Section 1206, activities that a community would normally undertake to administer and enforce its codes may be eligible for reimbursement. Eligible work may include:

- Costs for reviewing and processing building and floodplain management permits and plans.
- Hiring, training and supervising staff — including overtime for budgeted employees and straight and overtime for unbudgeted employees and extra hires.
- Inspecting structures
- Preparing cost information for substantial damage determinations.

With a grant of \$4,500, Lescure was able to hire contractors to inspect damaged properties and make sure new structures were going up according to building and floodplain codes. This allowed residents and other organizations to rebuild faster,



In May, Waverly resident Eileen Puckett was the first to move into one of 25 homes that will be built in the community by [the Appalachia Service Project](#), a Christian ministry that builds homes for low-income populations in the region. During the storm, Puckett had been trapped in her home with water up to her chest until a boat came to rescue her.

“When they told me that my part of the cost was zero, a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders,” said Puckett. Since the flooding in the summer destroyed her home, Puckett has been living in a small apartment building in town that was once Flo’s BBQ place.

Before moving into her new home, Puckett had been receiving rental assistance from FEMA. But because her home was in a Special Flood Hazard Area and she did not carry flood insurance, she was not able to receive federal funding for rebuilding. Her new two-bedroom home sits on the same property and is now raised two feet above the floodplain base. The HVAC equipment has been placed in the attic as a mitigation measure.

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