

FEMA Provides Federal Funds to Help Fight the Ryegrass Coulee Fire

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BOTHELL, Wash. – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has authorized the use of federal funds to help with firefighting costs for the Ryegrass Coulee Fire in Kittitas County, Washington.

FEMA Region 10 Administrator Mike O'Hare determined that the fire threatened such destruction as would constitute a major disaster. He approved the state of Washington's request for a federal Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) at 5:41 a.m. PDT on Tuesday, July 10. This is the first FMAG declaration for the 2018 Washington fire season.

The fire started on Monday and had burned in excess of 300 acres of state and private land. At the time of the request the fire was threatening approximately 140 homes in and around the community of Vantage, total population of 120. The fire was 0 percent contained.

graphic: fire management assistance grants supports firefighters

Approximately 105 of the threatened homes are primary residences and 35 are secondary homes. The fire imposed on Interstate 90, necessitating the immediate shutdown of the major economic corridor for the state, as well as threatened irrigation, fishing streams, and spawning sites along the Columbia River including the Rocky Coulee and Schnebly Coulee streams, Yakama Nation sensitive areas adjacent to the interstate corridor, and native wildlife including elk, mule deer and purple martins in the area. The state issued Level 3 "Go" mandatory evacuations for the community of Vantage.



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Page 1 of 2

FMAGs are provided through the President's Disaster Relief Fund and are made available by FEMA to assist in fighting fires that threaten to cause a major disaster. Eligible items can include expenses for field camps; equipment use, repair and replacement; mobilization and demobilization activities; and tools, materials and supplies.

In addition to reimbursement funding for fighting the Ryegrass Coulee Fire, under the FMAG declaration the state of Washington will be eligible for an additional \$566,667 in assistance through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 authorized FEMA to provide HMGP Post-Fire funds to eligible states and territories that receive Fire Management Assistance declarations and federally recognized tribes that have land burned within a declared area.

FEMA encourages HMGP Post-Fire funds be used for the mitigation of wildfire and related hazards, such as flood or erosion. However, HMGP is available for risk reduction of any hazard.

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