

# How FEMA Helps Maintain Local Building and Floodplain Controls after a Disaster

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Destruction caused by natural disasters in the U.S. annually totals an average **\$54 billion** in losses and requires federal spending averaging **\$17 billion**. Enforcing modern building codes and floodplain ordinances can be a powerful force in reducing those numbers and strengthening the nation's resiliency after disasters.

According to a FEMA study over a 20-year period, cities and counties enforcing modern building codes avoided at least **\$32 billion** in losses from natural disasters. Designing buildings to the latest international disaster-resistant standards has resulted in a national benefit of **\$11** saved for every **\$1** invested.

- Consequently, disaster-resistant building codes and floodplain management standards are priorities for FEMA and are becoming priorities for communities nationwide.?
- FEMA is involved in many efforts to help the nation become more resilient to disasters. One way is to reimburse local communities for enforcing their building codes and floodplain management regulations after a budget-busting disaster.
- FEMA is working with Kentucky Emergency Management and its commonwealth, federal and local partners to help local authorities make their disaster repairs and construction more resistant to future disasters, with particular focus on vulnerable communities.

## Reimbursing Local Governments

- **Section 1206 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018** makes more resources available to communities by reimbursing them for post-disaster floodplain management and building code activities through FEMA's Public Assistance program.



- The goal is to increase the speed of recovery and encourage compliance with modern building codes and floodplain management ordinances. By providing state, local, tribal, and territorial governments with additional resources, FEMA helps post-disaster activities conform to local building and floodplain regulations.
- Section 1206 changes how FEMA supports communities after a disaster. Efforts focus more on providing technical assistance, training and long-term support to damaged communities rather than focusing on collecting damage-assessment data.
- Reimbursement is available to eligible communities for up to 180 days after the date of a major disaster declaration, or until June 10. FEMA does not have authority to support activities occurring more than 180 days after the date of a declaration.

## How Communities Can Apply for Reimbursement

The process for seeking reimbursement is the same as it is for projects funded by FEMA's Public Assistance program. Communities must submit to FEMA their Request for Public Assistance with supporting documentation through the [PA Grants Portal](#). If you have questions about the Public Assistance program and the grants portal, reach out to your local emergency managers.

- Applicants need to submit documentation showing the location of the work and showing the work was completed. If work was performed by contract, the applicant must submit documentation showing federal regulations for procurement were followed, as with other Public Assistance requests involving contractors.
- FEMA may require an applicant to provide documentation demonstrating how the activities support the community's legally adopted building code or floodplain management ordinance.
- Eligibility for reimbursement for building and floodplain enforcement activities are essentially the same as they are for other reimbursements under [FEMA's Public Assistance program](#), with one extra requirement.
  - To be eligible, communities must be in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA does not fund activities in a community that is suspended from or has been sanctioned for not participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.



- Eligible applicants must be legally responsible to administer and enforce building codes or floodplain management regulation. For example, if a county is legally responsible, then the county would be the applicant.

## **Types of Work Covered**

- All building code and floodplain management regulation, administration, and enforcement activities must relate to the repair, replacement, or retrofitting of disaster-damaged structures in the jurisdiction of the applicant. This may include public, private and residential structures.
- Generally, work is considered eligible for reimbursement if it is consistent with work that the applicant normally does to administer and enforce building codes and floodplain regulations.
- Examples of eligible work include conducting field surveys, establishing damage trends, preparing cost information, hiring and training staff, collecting field data, and conducting damage inventory.
- Reimbursement is also available to help local floodplain administrators in making “substantial damage” determinations. Substantial damage refers to any structural damage where the cost of restoring the structure to its original condition would be equal to or exceed 50% of the market value of the structure.

