

# FEMA Public Assistance Grants Help Eastern Tennessee Communities Recover

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The FEMA Public Assistance Program provides supplemental grants to state, tribal, territorial, and local governments, and certain types of private non-profits so communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies.

Through the Public Assistance Program, FEMA provides supplemental Federal grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and specific facilities of certain Private Non-Profit organizations. The Public Assistance Program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future incidents by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures.

## Applying for Federal Public Assistance Grants

The four basic components of eligibility are **applicant**, **facility**, **work** and **cost**.

- An **applicant** must be a state, territory, tribe, local government or private nonprofit organization.
- A **facility** is a building, system or equipment, built or manufactured, or an improved and maintained natural feature.
- **Work** is categorized as either "emergency work" or "permanent work." It must be required as a result of the declared incident, located within the designated disaster area, and is the legal responsibility of the applicant.
- **Cost** must be directly tied to the performance of eligible work, must be adequately documented, reduced by all applicable credits, such as insurance proceeds and salvage values, authorized and not prohibited under Federal or SLTT government laws or regulations, consistence with the Applicant's internal policies, regulations, and procedures that apply uniformly to both Federal awards and other activities of the Applicant; and necessary and reasonable. Eligible costs include labor, equipment, materials, contract work, as well as



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direct and indirect administrative costs.

- **Federal Cost Share:** The assistance FEMA provides through the Public Assistance Program is subject to a cost share. The cost share ensures local interest and involvement through financial participation. The Federal share is not less than 75 percent of eligible costs. FEMA may recommend an increase if actual Federal obligations, excluding administrative costs, meet or exceed a qualifying threshold.
- For Emergency Work specifically, **the Federal cost share may be increased** in limited circumstances, and for limited periods of time, if warranted. For Tennessee, the Public Assistance program will be funded at 100 percent of the total eligible costs for a period of **120 days** of the State's choosing within the first **180 days** from the beginning of the incident period.

## Debris Removal Process on Public or Private Property

- After a disaster, it is often necessary to remove large amounts of debris from roads, buildings, waterways and anywhere else it may have been deposited by water and wind. There is no restriction to how quickly responders may get to work removing it so long as it is on public property, but the government needs permission to remove debris from private property, and only if it poses a public risk and the property owner gives permission to come on the property.
- FEMA works with governments to designate specific areas where debris removal from private property, including private waterways, is eligible. The debris removal must be in the public interest, not merely benefiting an individual or a limited group of individuals.
- Debris removal is eligible for Public Assistance if the work eliminates immediate threats to lives, public health or safety; eliminates immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property; ensures economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community at large; or mitigates risk to life and property by removing substantially damaged structures and associated structures and trimmings as needed to convert property acquired using Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds.
- State or local government can establish legal responsibility to perform private property debris removal. The process:
- The State or local government coordinates with homeowners to get a **signed Right of Entry form**, which allows a legal right of passage over another



person's private property. Typically, it is a piece of land immediately adjacent to roadways, electric transmission lines or oil and gas pipelines.

## **Completion and Payment**

FEMA distributes approved grant funds to the State of Tennessee when projects are complete and verified. Tennessee then distributes funds to the entities that completed the eligible projects.

