

FEMA Encourages Hurricane Helene Survivors to Check Your Furnace and Appliances as Winter Comes

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BRISTOL, Va.— Winter is on its way to the Blue Ridge Mountains. As temperatures continue to drop, take this time to check your heating system, water heater, furnace, and other electrical appliances that might have been damaged by Hurricane Helene. If your appliance isn't working and isn't covered by your insurance, you may be eligible to receive help from FEMA to repair or even replace it.

To apply for FEMA assistance, go online to www.DisasterAssistance.gov, call 800-621-3362, or use the FEMA App on your phone. If you use a video relay service or captioned telephone service, give FEMA your number for the service. For in-person assistance, visit your local [Disaster Recovery Center](#). The registration deadline is Monday, **December 2, 2024**.

When you apply for assistance, be sure to indicate the furnace and other essential electrical appliances damaged during the disaster. FEMA disaster assistance may provide reimbursement for the cost of a professional and licensed technician's estimate of the repair or replacement of these items. If you have already repaired or replaced these items, you can provide FEMA with valid estimates or receipts.

If you discover your heating system needs replacing after you have already received a FEMA grant, you can use the FEMA appeals process to request additional assistance. To learn more about the process, visit a [Disaster Recovery Center](#) for one-on-one assistance or call the FEMA helpline at 1-800-621-3362. If you choose to appeal, you must do so within 60 days of the date of your determination letter. www.fema.gov/assistance/individual/after-applying/appeals.

Repair and prepare your home before temperatures plummet. Here are some easy, low-cost tips to keep you safe, more secure, and more prepared in the face of the cold months ahead:



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- Inspect the exterior of your home to check for cracks or gaps in your weatherstripping and caulking. Seal any air leaks you detect.
- Replace furnace and heat pump filters once a month or as needed. Ensure interior and exterior vents are clean and not obstructed.
- Clean your gutters of fallen leaves and twigs to allow for proper drainage for rain and melting snow. Ensure downspouts are draining away from the foundation of your home.
- Drain the water from outdoor garden hoses. Disconnect hoses from faucets and cover the faucets.
- Clear debris from your roof. Cut back overhanging branches to prevent damage to shingles and gutters.
- Check your attic and ceilings for staining from water leakage. While you're up there, make sure the attic is properly ventilated to prevent mold and mildew.

For additional guidance on becoming #WinterReady, please visit <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>.

FEMA has set up a rumor response webpage to clarify our role in the Helene response. Visit [Hurricane Helene: Rumor Response | FEMA.gov](#).

For more information on Virginia's disaster recovery, visit vaemergency.gov, the [Virginia Department of Emergency Management Facebook page](#), fema.gov/disaster/4831 and facebook.com/FEMA.

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operators are available (press 2 for Spanish and 3 for other languages). Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency, or economic status. Any disaster survivor or member of the public may contact the FEMA Civil Rights Office if they feel that they have a complaint of discrimination. FEMA's Civil Rights Office can be contacted at FEMA-OCR-ECRD@fema.dhs.gov or toll-free at 833-285-7448.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by the federal government, federal contractors, and by recipients of federal financial assistance. Any recipient or sub-recipient of federal funds is required to make their programs accessible to individuals with disabilities. Its protections apply to all programs and businesses receiving any federal funds. This applies to all elements of physical/architectural, programmatic and communication accessibility in all services and activities conducted by or funded by FEMA. FEMA intends to comply with the Rehabilitation Act in all federally conducted and assisted programs in alignment with the principals of whole community inclusion and universal accessibility.



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