

FEMA Disaster Teams in Neighborhoods Helping Georgia Storm Survivors

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ATLANTA -- Federal disaster survivor assistance teams are working in storm – stricken neighborhoods helping Georgians recover from the January tornadoes. Additionally, housing inspectors contracted by FEMA are reviewing residential damages with survivors on-site.

Disaster survivor assistance teams are canvassing affected areas in the six designated counties of Berrien, Cook, Crisp, Dougherty, Turner and Wilcox. This will give residents an opportunity to register for disaster assistance and teams can quickly address immediate and emerging needs. They can also provide application updates and referrals to additional resources when needs remain.

Georgia residents are reminded to ask for federal and state photo identification before providing personal information.

Registration

Survivors should always contact their insurance company as well as register with FEMA for assistance. Georgians can register online at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362**, which is video relay service accessible. Survivors who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have difficulty speaking may call **TTY 800-462-7585**. Helpline hours are 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. local time, seven days a week until further notice.

Applying for disaster assistance is a two-step process that ensures consideration for all FEMA programs and disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, (SBA). This assistance may include:

- Grants to rent a new place temporarily as needed.
- Grants for essential home repairs not covered by insurance.
- Grants for serious disaster-related needs not covered by insurance — such as medical, dental, transportation, funeral expenses, moving and storage fees,



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personal property loss and child care.

- Low-interest disaster loans from SBA to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes to cover losses not fully compensated by insurance.

Housing Inspection

A housing inspector may contact the applicant to schedule an appointment to visit the home depending on the type and source of storm-related damages. When they arrive for the meeting, the FEMA inspectors will display official contractor photo identification. If the photo ID is not visible, it is important for survivors to ask to see it. This helps prevent fraud.

FEMA's contracted housing inspectors verify disaster damage; they do not need to document all damage. They ask about damage to the structure and building systems and major appliances, and they enter the information electronically into FEMA computers. Inspectors do not determine an applicant's eligibility for assistance.

An inspection generally requires 20-45 minutes to complete the assessment. To speed the process, applicants should:

- Keep their appointment or notify the inspector if a postponement is necessary.
- Tell the inspector about other property losses or disaster-related needs such as transportation, medical or dental care, tools and equipment required by an employer (if not self-employed) and educational materials, so inspectors can relay the information to FEMA.
- If possible, provide photos that can support the damage claims, at the time of inspection.

What to expect from inspectors:



- They have each applicant's nine-digit registration number and will never ask for it.
- They never require banking or other personal information.
- They do not hire or endorse specific contractors to repair homes or recommend repairs.

Homeowners are asked to show proof of ownership such as a tax bill, deed, mortgage payment receipt or insurance policy with the applicant's name, and the damaged property's address on the documentation. Renters must show proof of occupancy, a lease, rent payment receipt, utility bill or another document confirming the location was their primary residence at the time of the disaster. Both homeowners and renters must provide a valid driver's license or other photo identification.

Disaster survivors with communication-related disabilities—those who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have low vision and those with speech disabilities—may request reasonable accommodations to aid in communication. For instance, survivors may request an American Sign Language interpreter. Accommodations can be requested by contacting (800) 621-3362.

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