

After 2016's Spring Rains, A Flood of Assistance in Louisiana

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BATON ROUGE, La. — In the 12 months since the March severe storms pummeled and flooded much of Louisiana, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has helped thousands of people begin to recover.

Along with its federal and state partners, the agency has disbursed millions of dollars so people could start repairing their homes, cover disaster-related costs and stay in dry, safe lodgings as they did so.

FEMA's Individual Assistance program has approved nearly \$94 million in housing and other needs assistance. Its Public Assistance program has obligated more than \$47 million to reimburse communities for emergency work and infrastructure repairs. The agency has approved nearly \$20 million for disaster case management intended to help people who need extra assistance getting back on their feet.

The National Flood Insurance Program, administered by FEMA, processed 4,977 claims and paid out more than \$239 million for flood claims stemming from that disaster.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved nearly \$109 million in long-term, low-interest loans for homeowners and businesses.

Some 198 volunteer groups helped flood survivors, providing services such as muck outs, hot meals, home repairs and rebuilds, and distributing water, cleaning supplies, diapers and other baby supplies.

Even as residents have done the difficult job of repairing and rebuilding their homes, communities throughout the state continue to outline how they want to rebuild.



FEMA set up offices in Baton Rouge and Monroe to identify emerging local and regional needs, coordinate with federal agencies in local recovery efforts and provide guidance on post-disaster recovery planning. The agency has facilitated a number of local, state and federal roundtable discussions and forums on housing, business, health and agriculture. These events led to identifying 88 high level needs for attention by subgroups under the National Disaster Recovery Framework, which provides the state with expertise from federal agencies involved in long-term recovery.

In affected communities in Ouachita Parish for example, the Recovery Support Function teams brought in disaster recovery specialists from more than 10 federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Housing and Urban Development and the Commerce Department to develop technical assistance on disaster recovery projects. They looked to include proposals on green infrastructure, mitigation and ways to fight blight with in-fill construction.

This week marks the first Community Resilience Institute meeting for elected officials of parishes hit by the March floods. The institute is a result of FEMA's partnership with NOAA Sea Grant and the LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio.

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Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY, call 800-462-7585.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling 800-659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov, or visiting SBA's website at SBA.gov/disaster Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call 800-877-8339.

For mitigation information visit www.fema.gov/Louisiana-Disaster-Mitigation.



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