

Houses of Worship Have Until Feb. 16 to Apply for FEMA Public Assistance

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ST. CROIX, Virgin Islands – With the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) recent change in policy to allow private nonprofit (PNP) houses of worship to be eligible for disaster assistance, the deadline for these entities to make a Request for Public Assistance in the U.S. Virgin Islands has been extended to Feb. 16, 2018.

FEMA announced the change in policy on Jan. 2, 2018. These changes are effective for disasters declared on or after Aug. 23, 2017, including hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Under the new policy, houses of worship owned or operated by PNP organizations may be eligible applicants for financial assistance if their facilities were damaged or destroyed from a disaster.

FEMA financial assistance for the repair or replacement of a house of worship facility is limited to costs that a loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will not cover. Houses of worship must first apply to the SBA for a disaster loan. FEMA will provide financial assistance if the house of worship is denied a loan or if the loan authorized is insufficient to cover repair costs.

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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



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someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 (voice, 711/VRS - Video Relay Service) (TTY: 800-462-7585). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Following major disasters, the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the primary source of Federal funds for long-term recovery assistance. This assistance is in the form of low-interest loans and is available to non-farm businesses of all sizes, private nonprofit organizations, as well as homeowners and renters with property damaged by the disaster.

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To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, cash donations offer voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the "Fund for the Virgin Islands" at www.USVIrecovery.org.

