Spend Your FEMA Grant Wisely and Only on Disaster-Related Expenses

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SANTA FE, N.M. – As New Mexico residents affected by the wildfires begin receiving their FEMA disaster funds, it is important to use the money for specified disaster-related expenses.

FEMA helps applicants keep their spending on track by sending a determination letter stating what the funds are for and listing the ways the money can be used. Disaster grants are **not** for regular living expenses.

Some examples of approved expenses include:

- Home repairs (e.g., structure, water, septic and sewage systems)
- Rental assistance for rent and/or deposit
- Repair or replacement of an essential vehicle
- Medical or dental care for an uninsured injury caused by the disaster
- Necessary educational materials (e.g., computers, schoolbooks, supplies)
- Moving and storage expenses related to the disaster
- Replacement of essential personal property such as appliances or beds from an occupied bedroom
- Increased childcare expenses

It's important to read the determination letter carefully. Disaster funding may be subject to audits. Keep all receipts for at least three years. If grant payments are spent on anything other than its intended purpose, applicants may be denied disaster assistance in the future. In some cases, FEMA will ask that the money be returned.

In addition, it's important for applicants to make sure that FEMA has their most up-to-date contact information, including addresses, phone numbers and bank accounts. If FEMA does not have the correct contact information, applicants may miss letters or phone calls about their application for assistance or payment status.

To address many of the common myths and rumors during the New Mexico wildfires, FEMA activated a rumor/myth webpage on the disaster homepage. Visit the FAQ/Rumor page at fema.gov/nm-rumors.

For any questions, call the FEMA Helpline, 800-621-3362. Those who use a relay service such as a videophone, should update FEMA with their specific number assigned to that service. Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

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