



FEMA

Austin Joint Field Office

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News Release

FEMA to Those Who Receive Assistance: Use Funds for Its Intended Purpose

AUSTIN, Texas – Federal officials are cautioning Texans who have received disaster assistance from FEMA to use the money for its intended purpose and to keep disaster spending receipts for three years.

Disaster assistance is to help residents meet basic disaster-related needs and funds are distributed via check or direct deposit. A letter explaining what the payment is to be used for arrives within a day or two of the check or direct deposit payment.

If an applicant spends the payment on anything other than the purpose for which it is directed, he or she may be denied assistance the next time a disaster strikes. In some cases, FEMA will ask that the money be returned.

“Money from FEMA is not like a tax refund from the IRS, so please don’t treat it as such,” said Federal Coordinating Officer William J. Doran III, who is in charge of FEMA’s operations in Texas. “These funds are to help survivors in their disaster recovery and shouldn’t be used for anything else.”

Those receiving assistance are urged to keep receipts of their disaster spending for three years to document the money was used to meet disaster-related needs. If a recipient receives an insurance settlement to cover the same expenses, he or she must reimburse FEMA. Random audits are conducted to confirm funds were spent properly.

Disaster assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners.

Twenty-four counties are included in the May 26-June 24 federal disaster declaration: **Austin, Bastrop, Brazoria, Brazos, Burleson, Eastland, Fayette, Fort Bend, Grimes, Harris, Hidalgo, Hood, Kleberg, Lee, Liberty, Montgomery, Palo Pinto, Parker, San Jacinto, Stephens, Travis, Tyler, Waller and Washington.**

Federal assistance is available to eligible individuals and households, and those who work in those **24 counties.**

Applying for disaster assistance is essentially a two-step process, which ensures consideration for all FEMA programs and the U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loans. First, register with FEMA, then complete and return the no-obligation SBA loan application, if one is offered. There is no charge to apply for the loan and if approved, no obligation to accept it.

Disaster survivors may register the following ways:

- online at DisasterAssistance.gov
- phone **800-621-3362 (FEMA)**. Applicants who use **711** or Video Relay Service may also call **800-621-3362**. Persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability and use a **TTY** may call **800-462-7585**. The toll-free numbers are open from **7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week**. Multilingual operators are available.
- at a disaster recovery center. To find the nearest one, go online to the disaster recovery center locator at asd.fema.gov/inter/locator.

FEMA grants do not have to be repaid. FEMA assistance is nontaxable and will not affect eligibility for Social Security, Medicaid or other federal benefits.

Survivors should register even if they have insurance. FEMA cannot duplicate insurance payments, but underinsured applicants may receive help after their claims have been settled.

A free multilingual guide to the types of assistance available can be found at fema.gov/pdf/assistance/process/help_after_disaster_english.pdf

For more information on the Texas recovery, visit the disaster webpage for the May storms at fema.gov/disaster/4272; or visit the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at txdps.state.tx.us/dem. Follow us on Twitter [@femaregion6](https://twitter.com/femaregion6).

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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.



Download fema.gov/mobile-app to locate open shelters and disaster recovery centers, receive severe weather alerts, safety tips and much more.