



FEMA

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News Release

FEMA Expands Public Assistance Eligibility to Include Houses of Worship

WASHINGTON – The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced today that private nonprofit houses of worship are now eligible for disaster assistance as community centers without regard to their secular or religious nature. These changes are effective for disasters declared on or after August 23, 2017 and for applications for assistance that were pending with FEMA as of August 23, 2017, including applications on first- or second-level appeal, that as of today have not yet been resolved by FEMA.

Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), FEMA provides financial assistance, through its Public Assistance Program, to certain private nonprofit (PNP) organizations for the repair or replacement of facilities damaged or destroyed by a major disaster. FEMA's changes now make houses of worship owned or operated by PNP organizations eligible applicants for this financial assistance (1) if their facilities suffered damage from an event declared a major disaster on or after August 23, 2017, or (2) if they had applications pending with FEMA as of August 23, 2017 that, as of today, have not yet been resolved by FEMA.

As with other non-critical PNPs under the Stafford Act, FEMA financial assistance for the repair or replacement of a PNP house of worship facility is limited to costs that a loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will not cover. PNP houses of worship must apply to the SBA for a loan, as required by the Stafford Act. FEMA will provide financial assistance if the PNP house of worship is denied a loan or if the loan authorized is insufficient to cover repair costs.

This change will be reflected in the third edition of the Public Assistance Program Policy Guide, which will be available online at www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781.

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