

Post-Disaster Assistance



Part of the Public Safety Office's "Be Ready" series

There are many local, state, federal, non-profit, and private resources available for those impacted by both natural and man-made disasters. Here is a partial list of places you may be able to go for help.

DisasterAssistance.gov

<http://www.disasterassistance.gov>

DisasterAssistance.gov was created by a Presidential Executive Order following Hurricane Katrina. The website creates one-stop-shopping for disaster survivors seeking federal assistance. Currently victims can fill out a simple ten-question form to determine what forms of aid are available to them from 17 different federal agencies, including Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration, USDA, Department of Veterans Affairs, HUD, Social Security, and more. Applications to these agencies can also be made directly from this website.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

<http://www.fema.gov>

(800) 621-FEMA (3362)

(800) 462-7585 (TTY)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has monetary assistance available for disaster victims in federally-declared disaster areas.

Assistance may cover repair or replacement of damaged or destroyed homes, property, and vehicles that are underinsured or not covered by insurance, as well as for certain disaster-related costs such as medical/dental expenses, funeral and burial expenses, clean up items, temporary housing, and moving/storage costs for property while damaged homes are being repaired.

In addition, FEMA offers other types of assistance through third-parties, including counseling and legal help.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

<http://www.sba.gov>

The Small Business Administration can provide federally-subsidized loans to disaster victims, including homeowners, renters, and businesses, for repairs or replacement of disaster-damaged buildings and property. In addition, SBA can provide capital to businesses and agricultural cooperatives to help them financially survive the disaster recovery period.

Despite its name, SBA is the primary source of federal disaster assistance to individuals.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

Food and Nutrition Service

<http://www.fns.usda.gov>

The USDA has two main forms of disaster assistance available. The first, administered by the Farm Service Agency, offers federal assistance to farmers who suffer losses to crops or livestock due to a disaster. The second, administered by the Food and Nutrition Service, distributes food to disaster victims through state and local agencies as well as non-profit relief organizations.

The FNS also offers emergency food stamp benefits to disaster victims who ordinarily do not qualify, but have incurred disaster-related losses and expenses. Benefits for those individuals already receiving food stamps may also be increased following a disaster.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

<http://www.irs.gov>

The Internal Revenue Service is often loathed by taxpayers, but it too can provide some help. Certain disaster victims in federally-declared

disaster areas may be able to take a tax deduction for disaster-related losses, and can choose to take it in the tax year the disaster occurred or the previous year, whichever is more beneficial.

United States Department of Labor (DoL)
<http://www.ows.doleta.gov/unemploy>

The Department of Labor administers the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program, which provides up to 26 weeks of unemployment benefits and re-employment assistance for workers who are not covered by traditional state unemployment insurance (such as farmers, migrant workers, self-employed, and those who have insufficient quarters to qualify for benefits).

Benefits are payable when the applicant has suffered a loss in income due to a disaster, such as from losing their job, not being able to get to their job (even if they still have it), being unable to work due to a disaster-related injury, or becoming the breadwinner for the household due to the disaster-related death or incapacitation of the breadwinner.

DUA is applied for and disbursed through the State's Employment Development Department (EDD), as with normal unemployment insurance.

American Red Cross—Greater Los Angeles Chapter
<http://www.redcrossla.org/emergencyservices>

The American Red Cross is one of the most prominent non-profit relief organizations in any disaster response, required to respond and assist with relief efforts by Congressional Charter. Most disaster shelters are set up and operated by Red Cross volunteers, who provide water and food to victims. In some cases clothing and other items, as well as some medical necessities, are provided.

The Red Cross also offers "soft" services, such as counseling, guidance, and post-disaster referrals. In addition the Red Cross provides a means for disaster survivors to get "I'm okay" messages out to family and friends, or for family and friends not affected by the disaster to try to learn the status of an affected person.

Red Cross relief is not only available in large-scale disasters, but also for families whose homes have been destroyed by fire and other similar circumstances.

Salvation Army
<http://www.salvationarmyusa.org>

The Salvation Army, much like the Red Cross, is another prominent name in the field of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and basic necessities for those displaced by disasters. In addition, the Salvation Army often assists with recovery and reconstruction efforts following major disasters, including helping victims apply for financial aid, setting up child care centers, and assisting with delivery and distribution of construction materials.

Available assistance from all sources will vary, depending on the type and severity of the disaster as well as the individual needs of each applicant. Following a major incident, FEMA will set up one or more Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) in the affected areas to make applying for aid and services easier for those who need it.

Remember that federal assistance is only available for federally-declared disasters (past examples include 1994's Northridge earthquake, 2005's Hurricane Katrina, and 2009's Station fire in the Angeles National Forest in northern Los Angeles County); however other sources of assistance may still be available in other disasters.

For more information, visit the links in this publication, or do a web search for "disaster assistance" or "disaster relief."