



Joint Field Office  
75 N. Fair Oaks Ave., 3rd Floor  
Pasadena, CA 91103

**FEMA**

# Disaster News

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FEMA/OES: 626-431-3178  
SBA: 916-847-2638

## USE DISASTER FUNDS WISELY

**PASADENA, Calif.** — People who get disaster grants must follow the letter—the letter from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that explains how to use disaster funds.

Grants are tax free and are not a loan. They do not have to be repaid. They are not counted as income for welfare or other federal benefit programs and they cannot be garnished.

However, grants must be used as intended. Every recipient receives a letter about the same time they receive any money. The letter outlines how the money can be spent.

### *Housing funds may be used for:*

- Repairs to return the home to a safe and functional condition: These may include repairs to windows, doors, water and ventilation systems, or other structural parts of a home;
- Reimbursement for hotel or motel lodging expenses directly related to the disaster: Receipts for these expenses will be requested if the home sustained damages;
- Rental assistance: Applicants who must remain in temporary housing for a longer period than the initial assistance covers may request more assistance until their home can be re-occupied or other permanent housing arrangements can be made; or
- Rebuilding a home that has been completely destroyed.

### *Other Needs Assistance funds may be used for:*

- Personal property, specialized tools for employment, household items, appliances, and vehicle repair or replacement;
- Medical, dental and funeral expense; and
- Moving expenses and other disaster-related needs.

All expenditures must be disaster-related. If the grant money is *not* used as outlined in the letter, a recipient may have to pay it back and may lose eligibility for any further help.

Grants may be subject to an audit. Each recipient is responsible for spending the money as intended. Recipients are strongly encouraged to fully document their disaster-related expenses. They must keep receipts or bills for three years to demonstrate how all of the money was used in meeting disaster-related needs.

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*FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.*

*The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating the California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 1-800-462-7585.*

*SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955.*

*Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.*

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