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**FEMA**

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# Recovery News

## **FEMA SPEAKS IN ALL LANGUAGES**

### *ASL Interpreters in Disaster Assistance Centers*

**PASADENA, Calif.** — Vital disaster recovery information is available to all, no matter what their native language may be. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) now has American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in all assistance centers and it continues to provide recovery information in many languages to those who need disaster assistance information.

“We are pleased that we have been able to incorporate ASL interpreters into our assistance centers to help those who may need this vital service,” said Cindy Daniel, National Disability Coordinator for FEMA. “It is always FEMA’s priority to accommodate those who need important disaster recovery information regardless of any language barrier or disability.”

Assistance centers throughout affected areas have an ASL interpreter and a Spanish translator on site. Recovery information is provided in Arabic, Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Once the FEMA/state field office identified the language needs for the California wildfire disaster, FEMA multilingual staff made the request of their contractor to provide translators and interpreters. The contractor checked their bank of certified professionals and matched the appropriate specialists with the requested jobs.

“We want to reach all firestorm victims with important information,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Hall of FEMA. “Having ASL interpreters at assistance centers, as well as recovery information in the predominant languages identified for this disaster, provides convenient and non-stressful access to recovery information.”

The contracted ASL interpreters come from varied backgrounds—some are full-time interpreters, while others may work part time. For one, ASL was her first language. “Both my parents were deaf,” said Paula King, who is one of the interpreters serving assistance centers. “Learning sign language, as my first language, was a natural thing for me, and now I’m pleased to have the opportunity to use my skill to help my fellow Californians.”

ASL is a distinct, fully-developed language that has its own unique grammar and is distinct from English as well as from English-based sign systems. In recent years, ASL classes have experienced increased enrollment as more people become interested in studying the language.

At this time, interpreters are in assistance centers from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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### *ASL Interpreters in Disaster Assistance Centers*

*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.*

*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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