



FEMA

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News Release

How to Appeal a FEMA Disaster Assistance Decision

CLANTON, Ala. – Disaster survivors who registered with FEMA for the March 25-26 severe storms and tornadoes may receive a letter from FEMA stating they are ineligible for assistance. This may not be the final word. If you disagree with FEMA’s decision you can file an appeal with FEMA.

You will need to read your determination letter carefully to understand why FEMA decided the application was “ineligible.” Many times, the solution is as simple as providing missing documents or information.

FEMA may find you ineligible if the following documents are missing:

- **Insurance letters:** Documents from your insurance company that show your policy coverage and/or settlement is not enough to make essential home repairs, provide a place to stay, or replace certain contents. FEMA is unable to duplicate insurance payments. However, those who may be underinsured may still receive help after their insurance claims have been settled.
- **Proof of occupancy:** A copy of utility bills, a driver’s license or lease that proves the damaged home or rental was your primary residence at the time of the storms.
- **Proof of ownership:** Mortgage or insurance documents, tax receipts or a deed. If your documents were lost or destroyed, visit www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents for information on replacing lost documents.

Legal Services are Available

Free legal help with filing appeals and other disaster-related legal concerns is available to eligible survivors in **Bibb, Calhoun, Clay, Hale, Jefferson, Perry, Randolph, and Shelby Counties**.

Victims facing legal issues who are unable to afford a lawyer may call 334-517-2252, locally, or 1-800-354-6154, toll-free, between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, to request assistance. When connected to the hotline voicemail, callers should identify that they are seeking disaster-related legal assistance, provide brief details of the assistance needed and the county where they live. Individuals who qualify for assistance will be matched with Alabama lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal assistance.

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Types of legal assistance available include:

- Help with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster victims.
- Assistance with life, medical and property insurance claims.
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors.
- Replacement of wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster.
- Help with consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures.
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure and landlord-tenant issues.

Disaster legal services are not available for cases that may produce a monetary award. This free legal help program is funded by FEMA.

How to Submit an Appeal

All appeals must be in writing and signed by you the applicant. The appeal letter should explain why you disagree with FEMA's decision. It is important to include any documentation FEMA requested and/or documents that support your appeal claim, such as a contractor's estimate for home repairs. If the person writing the appeal letter is not the applicant or a member of the household, you as the applicant must sign a statement that the writer is authorized to act on your behalf.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to include a copy of the cover letter you received from FEMA when you submit your appeal documents.

Mail, fax or upload documents and your appeal letter **within 60 days** of the date on your determination letter.

- Mail: **FEMA National Processing Service Center**, P.O. Box 10055, Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055
- Fax: **800-827-8112**, and mark it **"Attention: FEMA – Individuals & Households Program."**
- To set up a FEMA online account or to upload documents online, visit disasterassistance.gov and click on "Check Your Application and Log In" and follow the directions.

Once you submit your appeal you will receive a decision letter within 90 days of FEMA's receipt of your appeal request.

If you need help understanding your letter, please call the **FEMA Helpline** at **800-621-3362 (TTY 800-462-7585)**. If you use a relay service such as a videophone, InnoCaption or CapTel you should update FEMA with your assigned number for that service. Be aware that phone calls from FEMA may come from an unidentified number. Multilingual operators are available at the **Helpline**. Lines are open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Central Time, daily.

The deadline to apply for FEMA assistance is **Friday, June 25**.

For additional online resources, as well as FEMA downloadable pamphlets and other aids, visit www.disasterassistance.gov and click "information."

For referrals to Alabama's health and human service agencies as well as community organizations, dial **211**, text **888-421-1266**, or chat with referral specialists via www.211connectsalabama.org.

For more information on Alabama's disaster recovery, visit ema.alabama.gov, [AlabamaEMA Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/fema), www.fema.gov/disaster/4596 and www.facebook.com/fema.

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.