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Recovery News

GET IN TOUCH WITH FEMA: IN PERSON, BY PHONE, INTERNET, AND U.S. MAIL

NEPTUNE, N.J. – Disaster survivors contacting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will find there are a number of communication tools available to help them on the road to recovery.

“New Jerseyans having to rebuild after Hurricane Irene have a big challenge ahead of them,” said FEMA’s William L. Vogel, federal coordinating officer. “We don’t want the disaster assistance process to become a part of those challenges.”

The disaster assistance process uses step-by-step methods intended to simplify registering and speed aid to those who need it. FEMA experts work one-on-one with survivors as needed and important information flows back and forth by phone, the Internet and U.S. mail.

While information is available from mobile FEMA sources, such as web-enabled smart phones, Twitter alerts and e-mail, the agency does not use these formats to communicate personal information to survivors. For example, FEMA would not send a text message to a cell phone to announce a grant receipt, or request additional information.

Survivors can get in touch and stay in touch with FEMA:

IN PERSON

Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) are one-stop shops that provide individual assistance to survivors who have registered with FEMA. Representatives from federal and voluntary agencies, including the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), are available at all New Jersey DRCs to answer questions and provide recovery information.

The centers are established at easily-accessed locations throughout a disaster area. Hours and locations are publicized in local media or online using the DRC locator, www.fema.gov/assistance/opensdrcs.shtm.

BY PHONE

FEMA maintains a toll-free phone line to help survivors register for disaster assistance and follow up on their status. Multilingual operators are available. The number is **800-621-3362 (FEMA)** or **(TTY) 800-462-7585** for individuals with access or functional needs. Once registered, survivors may access the Helpline at the same number and by following the voice prompts. Telephone lines are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., ET.

ONLINE

Survivors may register for assistance 24/7 at www.disasterassistance.gov. A series of on-screen prompts navigates users through the registration process. Those registering will need basic contact and insurance information. The process can take less than 20 minutes. Once you’ve registered, you can return to the site periodically, as needed, to check the status of a claim.

The website also offers a variety of resources for rebuilding after a disaster and provides action-oriented advice for lessening the effects of future disasters.

You also may access disaster information and recovery resources directly from your smartphone at FEMA's new mobile website at m.fema.gov.

BY MAIL

Survivors who receive federal disaster assistance are notified by mail of their eligibility status and the intended use of any grant they may receive. FEMA also uses the U.S. Postal Service to notify survivors when they are not eligible for assistance, the reasons they are not eligible and how to appeal a FEMA decision.

Survivors who receive mail from either FEMA or the SBA are encouraged to open it immediately, respond promptly and/or call the phone numbers provided for answers to their questions.

“Providing accurate, timely and complete information is crucial to recovery,” said Vogel, “regardless of the way you decide to communicate with FEMA.”

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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