

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES: PREPARATION AND FEMA GUIDANCE FOR PHAS

PHAs with public housing are eligible for FEMA's public assistance programs during Presidentially Declared Disasters. If your PHA has public housing, below is guidance on the application process, eligible items, and ways to be prepared in the event of a wildfire.

HOW FEMA CAN PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

ELIGIBLE ITEMS: FEMA's Public Assistance grants can address the following types of work:

- Emergency work to address immediate threat to life or property
- Permanent work to restore properties to pre-disaster design

Examples of eligible items include debris removal, safety inspections, pumping of flooded basement, mold remediation, and emergency protective measures.

ASSISTANCE OFFERED: PHAs should address the needed work as soon as possible. FEMA can then provide reimbursements of 50%-75% of costs after insurance. FEMA assistance can also be used towards insurance deductibles.

HOW TO PREPARE: In order to have a successful application, PHAs should maintain detailed documentation of damage through photos and written descriptions. PHAs should also maintain documentation of all costs associated with repairs.

Additionally, PHAs are responsible for following procurement policies, maintaining environmental compliance, and ensuring adequate flood insurance if applicable.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS: All PHAs are required to maintain insurance as described in 24 CFR Part 965 and Section 13 of the ACC contract. Insurance should be the PHA's first resource in addressing damages caused by a natural disaster. FEMA assistance can then be used for items not covered by insurance but may also be used towards insurance deductibles.

HOW PHAS CAN APPLY

FEMA's public assistance is administered through the State of California's Office of Emergency Services. In order to apply after a PDD, your PHA or local government representative should complete an application at the following site:

[Grantee.FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov)

Additionally, refer to California's Disaster website for updates and additional resources:

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/recovery/public-assistance>

HUD RESOURCES

HUD may also provide resources during emergencies such as:

- **Emergency Disaster Capital Fund Grants:** HUD provides \$20 million every year for emergency items on a first come, first served basis. PHAs can begin the application process through their local field office. Eligible items include costs associated with unforeseen/unpreventable emergency items. Routine maintenance and modernization efforts are ineligible. **Please note these funds can only be applied in the event of a non-Presidential Disaster Declaration.** PHAs cannot apply for both these funds and FEMA's Public Assistance grants for the same incident.
- **CDBG-DR:** HUD may issue a NOFA for CDBG-DR funds after a natural disaster in which states and local governments are the grantees. PHAs can work with their local grantee on obtaining funding. Eligible uses of CDBG-DR funds include disaster relief, long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure, housing, and economic revitalization.
- **HCV Additional Administrative Fee:** PHAs may apply for an increased administrative fee to their local Field Office through an approved Action Plan. PHAs who experience increased operational costs as a result of a disaster may apply.

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO BE PREPARED

- **Maintain a Continuation of Operations Plan and a Disaster Recovery Action Plan:** COOPs and DRAPS can provide guidance on procedures to follow in the event of a natural disaster and identifies methods for the PHA to maintain operations. The key information in COOPs and DRAPS can include: descriptions of how PHAs assess risk and how the PHA will react to natural disasters, coordination strategies between PHA staff and the local community and government, identify resources, and describe PHA core functions that must be maintained.
- **Reference the PHA Disaster Readiness and Preparation Guide:** This robust guidance document provides best practices on PHA disaster preparedness as well as guidance on how to draft COOPS and DRAPS.
- **Maintain a PNA:** In the event of a natural disaster, PNAs can be very beneficial. Conducting PNAs after a disaster can help maximize coverage. Additionally, referencing a recent PNA prior to a disaster can help demonstrate the extent of the damages. (PHA may use Capital Funds to fund PNA procurement)
- **Communication with Staff and Residents:** PHAs across the nation have developed different methods for communicating to residents in the event of a natural disaster such as email or text messaging systems. PHAs are encouraged to have plans developed to coordinate with participants.
- **Be Aware of Resources for Displaced Public Housing Residents:** If residents of public housing are displaced because of a natural disaster, the following resources may be available: FEMA's Individual

Assistance program which includes short-term rental assistance, Emergency Tenant Protection Vouchers, and HCVs through displacement preference.

Additionally, if PHAs also administers an HCV program, it can adopt a waiting list preference for households displaced by natural disasters in accordance with 24 CFR Part 982.207

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- California Wildfire Tracking: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/>
- California's Office of Emergency Services: <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/>
- List of Shelters in California: <https://wildfirerecovery.caloes.ca.gov/past-fires/november-2018-fires/shelters/>
- PIH Notice 2018-16 Guidance on Regulatory Waivers for PHAs in Presidentially Disaster Declared Areas: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/18-16pihn.pdf>
- Additional Resource Requests: <https://www.disasterresponse.org/>