



News Release

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VERMONTERS MAY APPEAL FEMA DECISIONS

BURLINGTON, Vt. – Everybody who registers for help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency will receive a letter from the agency.

Some receive a letter saying they are “eligible.” It states the amount of assistance they will receive and how the money must be spent.

Others receive a letter stating that they are “ineligible.”

“We understand that for people coping with loss, stress and upheaval, a letter saying they are ‘ineligible’ for FEMA assistance can be a blow,” said FEMA’s Federal Coordinating Officer Craig Gilbert. “But regardless of the reason for an ineligibility letter, you can appeal our finding. When you appeal, you are asking us to review your case and we will gladly do that.”

If you believe you should be eligible for assistance or are dissatisfied with the amount you receive, you may call FEMA’s Helpline for information on how to file an appeal. Specialists are available from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day at **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. Those with a speech disability or hearing loss who use a TTY can call 800-462-7585 directly; or 800-621-3362 if using 711 or Video Relay Service.

Instructions for filing an appeal are also in the “Help After a Disaster” guide that FEMA sends to all who register for assistance.

Before appealing, be sure you have gathered any information needed, such as insurance documents or proof of home ownership. An appeal letter must be submitted **within 60 days** of the date on an ineligibility letter.

In many cases, an ineligibility determination occurs because certain information is missing. This information may be any one of the following:

- Incomplete or missing description of damages
- If property is insured, lack of an insurance settlement letter
- No proof of residence
- No proof of ownership

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- No signature on file
- No inspection report
- Lack of a working phone number to contact applicant

Other reasons for ineligibility may include:

- Damage and claims covered by insurance
- Secondary homes not being eligible for grants
- More than one application from the same address
- Damage from the disaster did not cause the home to be “unsafe to live in”

“Please follow up with FEMA if you get a letter saying you are ineligible,” said Vermont Emergency Management Director Mike O’Neil. “It could be that once you send an appeal letter that supplies missing information or corrects wrong information, you’ll be found eligible.”

Anyone with questions about a letter may talk in person with a FEMA representative at a disaster recovery center. To locate a center, call the Helpline or go online to www.fema.gov/drclocator. However, it is NOT necessary to visit a center to get help. Applicants may always use the Helpline.

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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.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585; or call 800-621-3362 if using 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS).

FEMA’s temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

SBA disaster loan information and application forms may be obtained by calling the SBA’s Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for people with speech or hearing disabilities) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET; Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET or by sending an e-mail to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Applications can also be downloaded from www.sba.gov or completed on-line at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

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