

Q&A: Must I be a U.S. Citizen to Get FEMA Help?

FEMA is committed to helping all eligible disaster survivors recover from the effects of the **severe winter storms, flooding, landslides and mudslides in California that began on Feb. 21 and are continuing**. Some may avoid seeking federal help because they are discouraged by false rumors or incorrect information. However, help may actually be available. That is why it is important for disaster survivors to ask questions about their eligibility.

How do I apply with FEMA?

If you meet the eligibility criteria below and live in one of the counties designated to receive federal assistance, apply at disasterassistance.gov or call **800-621-3362**. Press 2 for Spanish. Press 3 for an interpreter who speaks your language. If you use video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA the number for that service. Helpline operators are available from **7 a.m. to 1 a.m. daily**. For an accessible video on how to apply, go to youtube.com/watch?v=WZGpWI2RCNw.

Who is eligible to apply for FEMA disaster recovery grants?

Disaster survivors who are **U.S. citizens, qualified aliens and non-citizen nationals** are **eligible** to apply for FEMA grant programs.

Who is considered a U.S. citizen?

Anyone born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam or the Northern Mariana Islands or a person born outside of the U.S. to at least one U.S. parent or a naturalized citizen.

If I have a child who is a U.S. citizen, am I eligible for federal assistance?

If you have a child under 18 who is a U.S. citizen, you may apply on behalf of the child. The minor child who has legal status with a social security number and living in the same home may apply for assistance on behalf of the household that suffered damages or loss.

Who is considered a qualified alien?

- Anyone who has obtained legal residential status, or a “green card.”
- Non-citizens **granted asylum**



- Non-citizens whose **deportation status is being withheld for at least one year**
- Non-citizens paroled into the U.S. for at least one year for urgent humanitarian purposes or significant public benefit.
- Refugees
- Cuban/Haitian entrants
- Certain aliens subjected to extreme cruelty or have been a victim of a severe form of human trafficking, including persons with a “T” or “U” visa

What is a Non-Citizen National?

A person born in an outlying possession of the U.S. (i.e., American Samoa or Swain's Island) or a person whose parents are U.S. non-citizen nationals. All U.S. citizens are U.S. nationals, but not every U.S. national is a U.S. citizen.

What if I am unsure of my specific legal status?

Individuals should consult an immigration expert to verify if they meet the immigration status requirements for FEMA disaster assistance.

What kind of FEMA assistance is available to survivors with legal status?

FEMA disaster assistance may include money for temporary rental assistance, home repairs, personal property loss and other serious disaster-related needs or expenses not covered by insurance or other means.

What kind of assistance is available to survivors with no legal status?

Voluntary organizations that offer sustaining resources such as shelter, food and hydration, crisis counseling, disaster case management and disaster legal services are available to disaster survivors regardless of citizenship and immigration status. Some include:

- The American Red Cross at 800-733-2767 or visit [local American Red Cross chapter](#) for information about your local Red Cross chapter.
- Dial 2-1-1 from any phone to find your local [United Way](#) or visit [211.org](#) to find the phone number for the service in your area.
- To learn about help available from other state and local volunteer agencies, visit California Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at [www.calvoad.org](#).

For the latest information on California’s recovery from the severe winter storms, flooding, visit [FEMA.gov/disaster/4699](#). You may also follow [twitter.com/CaI_OES](#), [facebook.com/CaliforniaOES](#), [@FEMARegion9/Twitter](#) and [Facebook.com/FEMA](#).

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

All FEMA disaster assistance will be provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, disability, limited English proficiency or economic status. If you believe your civil rights are being violated, call the Civil Rights Resource line at 833-285-7448.

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