

FEMA Outreach Teams headed to Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. – Outreach teams from FEMA will begin canvassing Nebraska communities affected by the flooding and straight-line winds beginning March 9, 2019 to help impacted Nebraskans register for federal disaster assistance.

The teams, known as Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams (DSATs), are working in counties designated as federal disaster areas to help residents register for help and to quickly identify and address immediate and emerging needs. The teams also can provide application updates and referrals to additional community resources for remaining needs.

On March 21, President Donald J. Trump approved individual assistance for nine Nebraska counties impacted by recent flooding and straight-line winds.

Currently, residents who were impacted by flooding and/or straight-line winds that began March 9 in the following counties are eligible to apply for federal disaster assistance: Butler, Cass, Colfax, Dodge, Douglas, Nemaha, Sarpy, Saunders, and Washington.

This assistance can include help with making temporary repairs to their disaster-damaged houses, paying for another short-term place to live while permanent repairs are being made and/or help with serious, disaster-related needs not already covered by other programs.

Additional counties may be added as more damage assessment information is received. FEMA and NEMA are continuously working to validate the damage.

DSAT team members can easily be identified by their federal photo identifications and FEMA clothing. Nebraska residents are reminded to ask for official photo identification before providing personal information. FEMA employees do not solicit or accept money from disaster survivors.

Housing inspectors contracted by FEMA also will be working in disaster-designated counties, inspecting damage sustained by survivors who have already registered with FEMA. When FEMA-contracted inspectors arrive at a home, they will display official photo identification. If the photo identification is not visible, it's OK to ask to see it. This helps prevent fraud.

Many legitimate disaster assistance representatives also may visit your property such as insurance agents, damage inspectors, FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) staff.

Again, federal workers do not solicit or accept money. FEMA staff never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help with registration.

Here are some tips to safeguard against fraud:

Ask to see ID badges. All FEMA representatives wear a federal photo ID badge. A FEMA shirt or jacket is not absolute proof of identity. If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter, please contact local law enforcement.

Beware of people going door-to-door. People knocking on doors at damaged homes or phoning homeowners claiming to be building contractors could be con artists, especially if they ask for personal information or solicit money. Be sure to verify federal ID badges of disaster assistance staff who may visit your home.

FEMA does not have “approved” contractors. Beware of contractors who say they are

affiliated with FEMA. Don’t sign anything you don’t understand, or contracts with blank spaces.

If you have knowledge of fraud, waste, abuse or allegations of mismanagement involving disaster relief operations, call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721.

Always use licensed and bonded contractors and ask for credentials. Never pay for anything in advance of work being done.

Survivors who sustained damage or losses caused by the flooding and/or straight-line winds can register with FEMA in the following ways:

§ Online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov.

§ By phone using FEMA’s toll-free registration line by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362). If you have a speech disability or hearing loss and use a TTY call 800-462-7585; or use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS) to call 1-800-621-3362. Telephone registration is available 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

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