

## Tips - Applying for Disaster Assistance

There are many disaster assistance programs. If you don't get help from one, you could still be eligible for another. The tips below are for **FEMA**, but other programs often require similar information.

*Apply ASAP.* The deadline to apply is 60 days from the date the disaster was declared unless extended by FEMA. Before contacting FEMA, write what you've lost as a result of the disaster -home, personal property, car, your job. Then write down what you need: a place to live, medical care, money for rent, help with repair or replacement of your home.

*Keep a Disaster Notebook.* Record your FEMA application number in your notebook. You will need it when you talk to FEMA. List each call you make or receive – the date, telephone number, the name and identification number of the person you called (or who called you) and what you were told.

*Save all receipts.* Save all papers related to your application, such as copies of letters to and from FEMA, your lease, rent receipts, leases, expenses related to your evacuation. If you can, take pictures of property damage.

*FEMA property inspection.* Make a list of specific damage to your property. When the inspector comes, try to be home to point out all of the damage to the inspector. If you believe you were denied because your inspection was bad, ask for a new inspection.

*Other tips:* Don't apply a second time as it will cause problems with your claim. If you haven't heard from FEMA, call them. If denied, you generally have 60 days to file a written, signed appeal. You should include the following statement: "*I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.*"

**Occupancy verification.** FEMA assistance is available to "occupants" of a household. This means that you must prove that you resided in the dwelling (house, apartment or other living space) before the disaster.

Here are 6 ways to verify occupancy, in order of usefulness:

*Utility Bill* – for your home with your name (or name of co-applicant). The service address on the utility bill is the street address of the home. This is the preferred verification of occupancy.

*Landlord* - The inspector can verify your occupancy in a rented house, apartment or leased space for a mobile home through your landlord. Have your landlord's contact information ready.

*Merchant's Statement* – a bill or similar document sent to your home with your name (or name of co-applicant). Merchant statements include credit card bills, delivery notices, and other first class mail addressed to you and showing the street address of the home. Use these only if you don't have a utility bill or landlord's statement.

*Employer's Statement* - a statement sent to your home with your name (or name of co-applicant). An employer's statement refers to pay stubs and similar documents sent to you and showing the street address of the home.

*Current driver's license, state-issued Identification card or voter registration* – Must show your name and your current street address.

*Declarative Statement* – If you are unable to establish occupancy with any of the above, you can submit a declarative statement as proof of occupancy. *Do not use the statement if it would conflict with any other information in your application.* This is your written, sworn statement, certifying that you normally occupy the residence for more than 6 months of the calendar year. It must be written, signed, and have the address of the damaged dwelling. The statement should include the following declarative statement in one form or another: "*I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.*"