

Understanding the Federal Disaster Declaration Process



Following a natural disaster the Governor of an affected state may request a preliminary damage assessment (PDA) to determine the losses and recovery needs of the state.

PDA's estimate the extent of the disaster and its impact on public facilities and individuals in support the Governor's request for assistance. Based on the results of the PDA, the Governor may request that the President of the United States declare a major disaster for the affected parts of the state.



FEMA evaluates the request and recommends the declaration type(s) to the White House:

- An Emergency Declaration (EM) is limited in scope and used to meet specific emergency needs. EM declarations are typically declared prior to Public and Individual Assistance declarations
- A Public Assistance (PA) declaration aids state or local governments with the costs associated with rebuilding a community's damaged infrastructure. PA declarations are typically declared before declarations for individual assistance.
- An Individual Assistance (IA) declaration provides aid to individuals for housing repairs, rental assistance, grants and low-interest loans.



The President approves the declaration or FEMA informs the governor it has been denied. If the request has been approved, the assistance associated with declaration type will be activated.

Although EM and PA declarations may be declared sooner, survivors are not eligible to apply for FEMA personal assistance until IA is declared for their county. Survivors can get declaration information and apply for FEMA assistance by visiting DisasterAssistance.gov, calling FEMA at 1-800-621-3362 or for TTY at 1-800-462-7585, or by visiting a Disaster Recovery Center.

