

GUIDANCE FOR WORKING WITH FEMA FOR DEBRIS REMOVAL FOLLOWING HURRICANES HARVEY & IRMA, WILDFIRES AND OTHER PRESIDENTIALLY DECLARED DISASTERS As storm victims struggle to recover from Hurricanes Harvey & Irma and fires in the west, community associations should strongly encourage residents to register for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

- Homeowners who need financial assistance to repair their primary residence, temporary shelter, or medical assistance should apply for FEMA Individual Disaster Assistance. FEMA asks survivors who have internet access to register for aid at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/assistance). If you can't get online, call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY). Registering will enable FEMA to begin the process of determining eligibility for aid and services.
- Businesses, associations, and homeowners may be eligible for Disaster Loan Assistance through the Small Business Administration. Visit <https://www.sba.gov/loans-grants/see-what-sba-offers/sba-loan-programs> for more information.

Piles of disaster debris likely line streets in numerous community associations in the Harvey and Irma impact areas as residents return to salvage belongings and rebuild homes. A major priority of associations must be the prompt and proper removal of this debris.

In general, *federal funds may NOT be used for debris removal from private property, such as a community association, without prior FEMA approval.* It is highly unlikely community associations will be reimbursed by FEMA for debris removal expenses unless proper channels are used to authorize the work.

Here are steps a community association manager/board should take to if your municipality is to be eligible for FEMA funding to remove disaster debris from your community.

- Verify your community's eligibility for federal debris removal assistance by contacting your municipal government (county, city, township, etc.) and your local FEMA representative to request debris removal assistance for your community association.
- Verify your municipal officials understand how to obtain FEMA approval to remove disaster debris from your community. This [guidance document](#) explains how local officials may request FEMA approval for debris removal from private property.
- FEMA may deny your request for debris removal services in your community association by classifying the association as a private community or business. If your community is denied federally-funded debris removal assistance, request an immediate review of the denial by regional FEMA officials and inform your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators of FEMA's denial.
- If FEMA denies your appeal and will not approve debris removal from community association streets, verify with county and FEMA officials that debris within the community may lawfully be moved by a private contractor to the closest public street or other designated location for removal by the county.
- Be patient.
- Visit www.fema.gov and www.caionline.org/communitypreparedness for updates

CAI is actively lobbying Members of Congress on this issue. If you have time, please share your client stories with us so we may include constituent examples with the legislators.