



**State of West Virginia
Emergency Management Division**

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Rumors and Misinformation Regarding FEMA Disaster Assistance

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — There often are many rumors and scams after a disaster. Do your part to stop the spread of rumors by doing three easy things:

- Find trusted sources of information.
- Only share information from trusted sources.
- Discourage others from sharing information from unverified sources.

Things you may hear or see:

FEMA will take my property and land after a disaster.

This is false. FEMA cannot seize your property or land. Applying for disaster assistance does not grant FEMA or the federal government authority or ownership of your property or land.

When you apply for disaster assistance a FEMA inspector may be sent to verify the damage to your home. This is one of many factors reviewed to determine what kind of assistance you may be eligible for. If the results of the inspection state your home is uninhabitable, that information is only used to determine the amount of FEMA assistance you may receive to make your home safe, sanitary and functional.

FEMA is handing out vouchers for disaster assistance.

This is false. FEMA does not hand out vouchers for disaster assistance.

It is common after disasters for rumors to circulate online and through text messages claiming FEMA will be at certain locations handing out vouchers for hotel stays, rental assistance, food, or other disaster services.

To receive FEMA assistance, you must first submit an application with FEMA.

Receiving a letter from FEMA stating that I am not approved means I will not receive any assistance.

It depends. When you receive a letter that states your application is “not approved” or “incomplete” you can [check your status](#) online or call the FEMA Helpline, 800-621-3362, for more information.

This letter may mean that more information is needed, or that your insurance claim needs to be settled before FEMA disaster assistance can be granted.

If my application is not approved, there is nothing I can do about it.

This is not true. Every applicant has the right to [appeal](#). An appeal is your chance to tell FEMA why you don’t agree with the decision the agency made. You may send new or additional information and ask FEMA to change its decision. You must mail or submit your signed appeal letter within 60 days of receiving your decision letter.

If you receive a grant from FEMA you will get less money from Social Security.

This is not true. FEMA assistance is not taxable and will not affect your eligibility for Social Security, Medicaid or other federal benefits.

If I receive a grant from FEMA, I have to pay it back.

This is not true. In most cases, FEMA grants do not have to be paid back. If you have insurance that covers your temporary housing costs, but you ask FEMA to advance you some money to help you pay for those costs while your insurance is delayed, you will need to pay that money back to FEMA after you receive your insurance settlement.

For more information, reach out to West Virginia Emergency Management Division at 304-558-5380, online at emd.wv.gov or via the official West Virginia Emergency Management Facebook Page.

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