

Public Assistance Funding for Elections and Polling

Public Assistance is available to States, Tribal Nations, Territories, and local jurisdictions following a Federal disaster declaration. Funding to repair disaster-related damage to a facility used to support election and polling activities and other costs may be eligible for Public Assistance.

Background

Stafford Act Section 403 authorizes FEMA to support essential community services. Public Assistance is available to states, Tribal Nations, territories, and local jurisdictions after a Federal disaster declaration to help repair facilities supporting election and polling activities or establish an alternate location. Elections, as critical government functions, are managed by state and local governments, which determine polling locations and assess the need for Federal assistance. Disasters can damage or destroy polling stations, typically in public facilities like schools and community centers, or render them unusable due to power outages or being repurposed as shelters.

FEMA reimbursement and direct Federal assistance is limited to activities that save lives, protect property and public health and safety, and mitigate the threat of further disaster. If a disaster damages or makes election facilities or voting equipment inoperable, FEMA may provide assistance, subject to cost-share requirements.

Eligibility for Elections and Polling Work

- Public Assistance can fund work related to elections and polling activities which are essential community services of a governmental nature necessary to preserve the proper function of communities if the following criteria are met:
 - The damaged facility is located in a disaster declared, designated county/parish.
 - Damage was caused by the declared event.
 - The entity is responsible for conducting election and polling activities at the damaged site as designated by the state, Tribal Nation, territory, or local jurisdiction.
 - Cost must be reasonable and necessary.

Examples of Reimbursable Costs Include:

- Addressing temporary repairs to restore a disaster-damaged facility used for election and polling.
- Establishing alternate polling locations, including establishing or setting-up temporary or leased facilities, if the original facility is destroyed, damaged, or otherwise unavailable due to the disaster.



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- Ensuring alternate or repaired buildings meets accessibility standards as identified by the Tribal Nation or state and territory law such (i.e., Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act).
- Generator(s) may be provided if an election and polling facility lacks power due to the declared event.
- Communication and public outreach costs related to notifying voters of new polling and elections site locations and public transportation availability through various channels such as mail, email, public messaging via media outlets, and municipal websites and other channels as required by State, Tribe, territory or local regulation.
- Signage redirecting voters from the original and alternate polling locations to provide the address, ballot drop box locations, and other relevant details.
- Damaged facilities, equipment, and supplies including costs related to:
 - Certified voting systems and other voting technology, including rental of certified voting machines necessary to establish an alternate polling location.
 - Ballot boxes to replace damaged or inaccessible collection boxes at alternate polling location.
 - Supplies, materials, and equipment to support election and polling such as secrecy sleeves, registration forms, “I Voted” stickers and other materials required for casting, counting, and recording votes, including reprinting disaster damaged ballots.
- Barricades or fencing to create a perimeter around unsafe areas or direct voters at the facility supporting election and polling activities.
- Debris removal to safely access election and polling locations. Debris removal must also be in the public interest and eliminate immediate threat to lives, public health, and safety, or ensure economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large.

Examples of Non-Reimbursable Costs Include:

- Costs related to undamaged items.
- Signage conveying candidates, political affiliation, or ballot proposition.
- Mold remediation as a result of poor facility maintenance or failure to take protective measures.
- Costs related to Americans with Disability Act accessibility violations.
- Increased operating costs such as trash removal, administrative costs, food or water, and other costs not related to the temporary establishment of election and polling facilities.
- Parking improvements.
- Costs to manually enter data that was lost in damaged computers.
- Loss of revenue.