



**Cal OES**  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES



**FEMA**

Oct. 17, 2020  
DR-4558-CA NR 031  
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# News Release

## **Wildfire survivors receive remote FEMA property inspections**

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** – FEMA requires a home inspection before it can make monetary awards to help survivors repair or replace their homes that were damaged or destroyed by the siege of wildfires that started Aug. 14 and are covered by the Aug. 22 major disaster declaration.

FEMA is always concerned about the safety of disaster survivors. Until recently, its inspectors conducted in-person inspections of properties. Due to COVID-19 and the need to protect the safety and health of disaster survivors and FEMA personnel, the agency is conducting inspections by phone after a person reports home damage while registering for FEMA assistance. These remote inspections are a new way of recording damage that is comparable to traditional, in-person assessments that expedite the safe delivery of recovery assistance to eligible survivors.

The process is as follows:

- To conduct or schedule a remote damage inspection, FEMA inspectors telephone survivors who reported at the time they applied for assistance that they may not be able to -- or cannot -- live in their homes due to damage, including smoke damage. An inspection phone call will take approximately 30 minutes.
- Inspectors use the telephone numbers applicants provided to FEMA when they registered for assistance. Applicants should immediately inform FEMA if there is a change in their telephone contact number so that the correct one will be available for an inspector. The process of receiving assistance is delayed when inspectors don't have correct phone numbers or applicants don't respond to an inspector's call or text.
- To verify inspectors have reached the right applicant, they ask for the last four digits of the person's FEMA registration number. To confirm the identification, the inspector will then tell the applicant the first four digits of their registration ID.
- Reasonable accommodations, including translation and American Sign Language interpreters via Video Relay Service, will be available to ensure effective communication with applicants with limited English proficiency, applicants with disabilities, and other individuals with access and functional needs. If you use a relay service such as a videophone, InnoCaption or CapTel, provide FEMA the specific number assigned to that service when you register.
- Based on the applicant's responses during the remote damage inspection, FEMA determines awards for rental assistance and home repair or replacement. The amount of the award for home repair depends on the type of residence and the level of damage sustained as indicated by the applicant's responses during the remote inspection.

- Inspectors record damage. They do not determine an applicant's eligibility for assistance or the amount or type of assistance that FEMA can offer.
- Applicants who reported that their homes were damaged but that they can continue to live there will not be scheduled for a home inspection. Should these applicants later discover that their homes sustained more costly damage than originally reported, they may file an appeal to FEMA requesting additional assistance. They may also then request an inspection.
- Survivors can make appeals using their personal online disaster assistance accounts or by phoning the FEMA Helpline at 800-331-3362 (TTY 800-462-7585) between 7 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. PDT. If you use a relay service such as a videophone, InnoCaption or CapTel, provide FEMA the specific number assigned to that service when you register.

Home inspections have no influence on the types of FEMA assistance that don't require an inspection, such as disaster-related expenses for personal property replacement, childcare, transportation, medical, dental, funeral, moving and storage, or other serious disaster-related needs.

For the latest information on wildfire recovery, visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4558> and follow the FEMA Region 9 Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/femaregion9>.

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*All FEMA disaster assistance will be provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), religion, national origin, age, disability, limited English proficiency, economic status, or retaliation. If you believe your civil rights are being violated, call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585(TTY/TDD).*

*FEMA's mission: Helping people before, during, and after disasters.*

*The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private nonprofit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property.*

*For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955. TTY users may also call 800-877-8339. Applicants may also email [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov) or visit SBA at [SBA.gov/disaster](https://SBA.gov/disaster).*