



**FEMA**

# News Release

December 21, 2012  
DR-4086-NJ NR-066  
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## **FEMA WORKS TO HELP NEW JERSEY MEET SANDY HOUSING NEEDS**

**TRENTON, N.J.** — The Federal Emergency Management Agency and its partners are working to address the housing needs of people displaced by Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey. The top priority is to help survivors return to their homes or to help them find a safe housing alternative if returning home is not an option.

More than **16,000** households have received FEMA grants to make essential repairs to their homes.

For those who cannot return home, the goal is to help them find a rental property close by. This is better for survivors and helps the whole community recover.

### **Rental Assistance**

More than **41,000** families have received temporary rental assistance from FEMA to help pay for an apartment, house or other temporary home. This assistance is provided while displaced survivors are working to find a permanent housing solution.

Returning to a permanent home is a significant milestone on the road to recovery. FEMA rental assistance may last for up to 18 months from the date of declaration. So it's important for survivors to have a permanent housing plan.

FEMA has a housing portal at [www.fema.gov/housingportal](http://www.fema.gov/housingportal) to help families find rental units. In addition to apartments or homes normally available, the portal identifies units provided by federal partners.

To be eligible for possible rental assistance, survivors must first register with FEMA. There are many ways to register.

Survivors can register online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or via smartphone or tablet by using the FEMA app or going to [m.fema.gov](http://m.fema.gov). People may also call **800-621-3362** or **(TTY) 800-462-7585**. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services can call 800-621-3362. The toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day seven days a week until further notice.

The deadline to register with FEMA is Jan. 30, 2013.

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### **Transitional Sheltering Assistance**

At the request of the state, FEMA activated the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program to move eligible survivors from shelters into hotels or motels if they couldn't return to their damaged homes. TSA lodging expenses are paid directly to the hotel by FEMA.

Nearly half of the more than 5,000 households that temporarily stayed in a hotel or motel in New Jersey have moved to more sustainable housing. The average hotel/motel stay is 15 days.

The program operates in two-week increments. During each two-week period, FEMA reviews the eligibility of each applicant and emphasizes finding a more sustainable temporary housing solution as quickly as possible.

The TSA program has been extended through Jan. 11, 2013, for those who continue to meet eligibility criteria. The new extension will allow eligible applicants to remain in participating hotels during the holiday season. FEMA will call applicants eligible for the extension to notify them of the extension period and the checkout date of Jan. 11, 2013.

TSA-eligible survivors can receive help finding a hotel by calling: **800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **TTY 800-462-7585**. The toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week until further notice. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services can call 800-621-3362. The toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day seven days a week until further notice.

Help finding TSA participating hotels also is available online: [www.femaevachotels.com](http://www.femaevachotels.com).

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is supporting the housing recovery.

The department increased the Fair Market Rent standard to 120 percent so families with Section 8 housing choice vouchers have more options. It also relaxed rules to allow senior housing providers to open up vacant units to Hurricane Sandy survivors under the age of 55 without jeopardizing a community's qualification for certain legal exemptions under the Fair Housing Act.

HUD is also giving the state and communities the flexibility to redirect millions of dollars of Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships funds for housing and services for disaster survivors.

HUD has directed banks to hold off on foreclosures and forbearance of Federal Housing Administration mortgages for disaster-affected areas for 90 days following the date of the presidential disaster declaration.

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### **Temporary Housing Units Provided by FEMA**

A temporary housing unit – either a manufactured home that can be put in an existing commercial mobile home park, or a remodeled apartment unit at Fort Monmouth — is a last option when renting a property is not possible or reasonable. Decisions on direct federal housing units for survivors are made on a case-by-case basis.

Forty-five units at Fort Monmouth will soon be made available to eligible survivors. Manufactured homes will be installed as needed and as suitable pads are identified at commercial mobile home parks.

By law, federal temporary housing assistance can last only up to 18 months from the date of the disaster declaration.

### **Call If Your Housing Needs Change**

It is critical that FEMA has your current contact information. If housing advisors cannot reach you, then they will be unable to discuss housing options with you.

If you have a continuing housing need, or if you need to update your contact information, please call by phone or 711/VRS - **800-621-3362**, **TTY 800-462-7585**. The toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

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