



FEMA

News Release

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FEMA BREAKS DOWN COMMUNICATION BARRIERS ON THE ROAD TO SANDY RECOVERY

TRENTON, N.J. — Hurricane Sandy survivors in New Jersey live in one of the most culturally diverse states in the country and communicate in numerous languages. The Federal Emergency Management Agency works to reach all of them.

People with disabilities and/or access and functional needs are now the focus of the first full-scale operation by FEMA to offer ready access to valuable disaster assistance and recovery information in all disaster recovery centers.

Survivors can visit any disaster recovery center to connect with American Sign Language or Signed English interpreters either face to face by requesting it ahead of time, or in real time using Video Relay Services or Video Remote Interpreters.

Assistive listening devices, amplified phones and caption phones for survivors who are deaf or hard of hearing are available in the centers, as well as magnifying devices and printed information in Braille and large print for people who are blind or have low vision.

Teams of FEMA Community Relations specialists – armed with publications in **English, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Urdu, French and Braille** – canvassed communities affected by Hurricane Sandy. The teams are going door to door to deliver valuable recovery information and to encourage residents with damaged property to register for assistance.

To date, FEMA has translated more than a dozen disaster assistance fliers, brochures and pamphlets into **23** different languages.

Since the major disaster declaration for Hurricane Sandy, more than **650** Community Relations specialists have been in New Jersey, including more than **220** FEMA Corps members. Four dozen of these specialists were bilingual or multilingual, speaking a combined total of **24** languages including American Sign Language.

Multilingual specialists also maintain contact with media outlets whose audience consists mainly of non-English-speaking readers, listeners, or viewers. Spanish-speaking public information officers from FEMA have given dozens of interviews to Spanish-language media, appeared on radio talk shows and spoken with community groups across the affected area.

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Hurricane Sandy recovery updates are available in English and Spanish on the agency's website, which is also designed for use by people with sensory disabilities. Spanish-speaking survivors can choose to follow **FEMAespanol** on Twitter to receive recovery updates.

Groups, associations and businesses that have non-English-speaking members who sustained damage as a result of Hurricane Sandy and who want to know more about federal and state disaster assistance can contact FEMA's Speakers Bureau for presentations in **13** languages, if needed. Sign language interpreters are also available.

Multilingual telephone operators are available to help non-English-speaking survivors register for disaster aid and to get their questions answered. After dialing FEMA's helpline at **800-621-3362** or **TTY 800-462-7585**, callers can choose Option 3 for other languages. FEMA can provide interpretation services in **250** languages. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services can call 800-621-3362.

FEMA's multilingual webpage at www.fema.gov/all-languages offers a wealth of disaster assistance information and Ready.gov can be viewed in **12** languages.

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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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