

NEWS

Federal disaster declaration declared after August flooding

By [Mike Nolting](#)
January 31, 2024 - 4:18 pm



Isaac Sparks' mobile home was knocked off its foundation and moved several feet on Winifrede Hollow on the morning of Aug. 28, 2023. (Photo/MetroNews)

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. — President Biden has approved a [major disaster declaration](#) for Kanawha, Harrison, Boone, Calhoun and Clay counties following storms in August 2023 that caused flooding, mudslides, and landslides.

The counties have been approved for individual assistance.

Impacted residents can begin applying immediately for assistance. You can visit online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](#), call 1-800-621-3362 or by using the FEMA app.

- [FEMA App](#)

Officials in the five counties are working to help storm victims. Director of Kanawha County Emergency Management is assisting homeowners and storm damage victims.



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C.W. Sigman

“Individual homeowners can talk to the people in the disaster center there and have their invoices and proof of damage, pictures, and things of that nature,” Sigman said. “At that point, FEMA will make a determination of how much each person will get.”

According to FEMA, assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-interest loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

Sigman said parts of Winifrede Hollow, also known as Fields Creek, received approximately 3.7 inches of rain on the last weekend of August. He said three homes in Winifrede and other areas were a total loss with another 32 homes sustaining major damage, 54 with minor damage, and at least 24 more affected homes. 22 private bridges were also destroyed.


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Bridgeport Director of Emergency Management Tim Curry said he expects FEMA personnel to be busy when they do arrive. The communities of Anmore and Lost Creek also suffered significant damage.

“We had about 130 homes that were identified as having damage from the flooding,” Curry said. “That ranged from minor damage to major losses like entire basements and things.”

The approval comes days after new guidelines were released by FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell that have the most sweeping changes in 20 years in the Individual Assistance Program. In a release dated January 22, 2024, the agency said they will provide new flexible benefits to survivors, curtail red tape, and simplify the application process.



The state Department of Emergency Management organized search and rescue teams at Winifrede Hollow. (Photo/MetroNews)

“By making it easier for people to apply for and receive assistance, we are going to help them become more prepared and more resilient for the next threat that may come their way while removing barriers for their long-term recovery,” said Administrator Criswell. “It truly fills me with great pride to know that we continue to look for ways to prioritize disaster survivors in everything that we do.”

Sigman said FEMA won’t do the work, and they will reimburse every dollar of loss, but they will work to ease the loss.

“Understand it’s not going to make them whole,” Sigman said. “If you had a house destroyed that was worth \$100,000, you’re not going to get \$100,000 from FEMA, but they will do things to help you through the crisis.”

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Curry said before FEMA arrives now is a good time for storm victims to reorganize information for the storms of August 2023. Get documentation, pictures, and receipts, and pause to refresh your own memory so nothing is left out.

“It’s a hurry up and wait thing, so we know help is coming now, and that’s great,” Curry said. “There are going to be a lot of “next steps” on the back side for us—getting FEMA into town and getting them set up in offices.”

Like Curry, Sigman said they have had a lot of support getting through the Individual Assistance Program, and now officials are working on a declaration for the Public Assistance portion that would help municipalities address infrastructure damage from the August storm event.

“They worked hard with us on this and helped us crunch the numbers,” Sigman said. “Our Congressional delegation has helped us out, as has the governor, so it took a lot of work to get this through and approved.”

The state is next expected to seek a federal disaster declaration for public assistance.

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