



GEMA

Joint Information Center  
Joint Field Office  
Atlanta, GA



FEMA

# News Release

June 2, 2008  
DR 1761-08-011  
FEMA/State News Desk:  
(770) 724-6958

## **INELIGIBILITY LETTER MAY NOT BE LAST WORD FOR GEORGIA DISASTER ASSISTANCE APPLICANTS**

**ATLANTA** – People who have applied for a federal disaster housing assistance grant to help cover costs from the May 11-12 Georgia tornadoes should not despair if the first response they receive is negative.

“Every applicant has the right to appeal,” said Jeff Bryant, federal coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “and, depending on the circumstances, may be able to reverse the initial ruling.”

“At this time,” Bryant added, “we have Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) open in 10 counties. If you receive a letter saying that you are ineligible, you can meet face-to-face with a specialist at one of the DRCs to get help with appealing.”

The letter does not necessarily mean that an applicant cannot receive state/federal assistance. It often indicates that FEMA did not receive all the information the agency is legally required to have before providing financial aid. In that case, an appeal that supplies the missing information will often be successful.

Typical reasons for ineligibility because of incomplete information are that the applicant did not:

- Provide proof that the damaged property was the primary residence at the time of the disaster;
- Provide evidence of identity;
- Provide documentation of the disaster damage;
- Provide proof of ownership of the damaged property;
- Sign documents.

Other reasons FEMA might send a letter of ineligibility that may be appealed are that the applicant has not completed and returned the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan application for homeowners and renters, which is a necessary step before FEMA can make a housing assistance grant, or that the damages were too small to qualify for assistance.

(MORE)

## INELIGIBILITY LETTER MAY NOT BE LAST WORD – Page 2

Still another reason could be that the losses are covered by insurance. FEMA cannot duplicate insurance benefits. If the applicant can show the need for help with losses not covered by insurance, an appeal may be successful.

An appeal may also be made when an applicant receives an award but believes the amount to be too low.

Appeals must be made within 60 days of the ineligibility letter. Applicants or someone they designate to act on their behalf must explain in writing why they believe the initial response was wrong and provide any new or additional information and documents that support the appeal.

More information about how to appeal is in the Applicant's Guide that FEMA mails to each applicant and online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). Applicants may talk with experts daily 8 a.m.-6 p.m. local time on FEMA's toll free Helpline, **800-621-FEMA (3362)**, or for the hearing- and speech-impaired, TTY 800-462-7585. Applicants can check the status of their appeals by calling these same numbers or on the FEMA Web site.

“We want to ensure everyone who is eligible receives all the federal assistance they are entitled to,” said Joe McKinney, deputy state coordinating officer for the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). “People should not be discouraged if they need to file an appeal to be sure they access the available help.”

Applicants who are ineligible for a housing assistance grant may still be eligible for low-interest loans from the SBA for homeowners, renters and businesses of any size and help from other state and federal programs.

*FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.*

*SBA's disaster loans are the primary form of federal assistance for non-farm, private sector disaster losses. Disaster loans from SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and nonprofit organizations fund repair and replacement of disaster damaged real and personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955 or online at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).*

###

For more information on Georgia's disaster recovery, visit [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or [www.gema.ga.gov](http://www.gema.ga.gov) or [www.georgia911.org](http://www.georgia911.org)