

DEBRIS REMOVAL GUIDELINES¹

What's eligible:

Upon the Presidential declaration a major disaster or emergency, Federal assistance is available. FEMA designates the area eligible for assistance and the types of assistance available.

FEMA may grant assistance for:

- ◆ debris removal,
- ◆ emergency protective measures, and
- ◆ the permanent restoration of facilities.

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DEBRIS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Must be for:

Debris removal and emergency protective measures must be necessary to:

- ◆ Eliminate immediate threats of life, public health, and safety; or
- ◆ Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property.

The following criteria apply to all types of work and to all applicants. There may be additional criteria for specific types of work or facilities.

Debris Removal Guidelines

Debris Eligibility Criteria Basic criteria for all assistance to be eligible are that work or expenses must be:	
A result of the declared event and not of a pre-disaster condition or some other event	<p>Direct result. The work must be required as a direct result of the declared event--severe storm, flooding, earthquake, etc.</p> <p>An "incident period" established by FEMA after consultation with the Governor's Authorized Representative generally begins at the start of the event and lasts as long as necessary to include all normal damages from the event.</p> <p>Primarily, damages that occur during the incident period, or are the direct result of events that occurred during the incident period, will be considered for eligibility.</p> <p>In addition, protective measures and other preparation activities performed within a reasonable time in advance of the event will also be considered.</p> <p>Damages that occur after the close of an incident period but can be tied directly to the declared event may also be eligible.</p>
Be within the area designated by FEMA as eligible for assistance.	<p>Designated area. The damages must have occurred, or the work or activity may be performed or support the performance of such work, within the designated disaster area.</p> <p>When a declaration of a major disaster is made for a State, the Associate Director designates those counties of the State that are eligible for assistance.</p> <p>The type of assistance is also specified: public assistance (for State and local governments and for Public Non-Profit organizations) and individual assistance (for individuals and families).</p> <p>Different counties may be eligible for one or both types of assistance, depending on the needs of the area.</p>
Be the legal responsibility of the applicant.	<p>Responsibility. The work or expense must be the legal responsibility of the applicant. Generally, ownership of a facility is sufficient to establish responsibility for repairs a facility.</p> <p>Mutual aid agreements between local governments or between a local government and the State may establish the responsibility for reimbursement by the government receiving the assistance.</p>

Debris Removal Guidelines

Debris Eligibility Criteria	
Basic criteria for all assistance to be eligible are that work or expenses must be:	
Not eligible for assistance under another Federal program.	Cost. Reasonable costs directly attributed to a project are generally eligible. They include labor, materials, and equipment costs when the applicant performs the work itself (force account) or contracts awarded for the work.

DEBRIS REMOVAL ELIGIBILITY

Includes:

Debris that may be eligible for clearance and removal includes:

- ◆ trees,
- ◆ sand and gravel,
- ◆ building wreckage,
- ◆ vehicles,
- ◆ personal property, etc.

Must be for:

To be eligible for FEMA assistance, such removal must be necessary to do one of the following:

- ◆ Eliminate immediate threats of life, public health, and safety; or
- ◆ Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property.
- ◆ Ensure economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large

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Debris removal from public property	<p>Debris that is on public property must be removed to allow continued safe operation of governmental functions and , therefore, if eligible under one of the first two criteria.</p> <p>However, not all public property clearance is necessarily eligible.</p>
Private property	<p>This is the responsibility of the individual property owner aided by insurance settlements and assistance from volunteer agencies.</p> <p>Most homeowner fire and extended coverage insurance policies have specific coverage for debris removal and demolition of heavily damaged structures.</p> <p>FEMA assistance is not available to reimburse private property owners for the cost of removing debris from their property.</p> <p>However, an eligible local or State may government may pick up and dispose of disaster-related debris placed at the curb by those private individuals.</p> <p>If the debris on private business and residential property is so widespread that public health, safety, or the economic recovery of the community is threatened, the actual removal of debris from the private property may be eligible. In such situations, the work normally must be done or contracted by an eligible applicant.</p>
Drainage structures	<p>Debris removal from certain drainage structures may have to meet the following criteria:</p> <p>Reservoirs: may be eligible in accordance with the criteria for debris basins below. Removal of debris that poses an immediate threat of clogging or damaging intake or adjacent structures may be eligible.</p> <p>Natural streams: Not normally eligible for assistance. Only debris that causes a threat to lives or public health and safety or damage to improved property from a 5-year flood event is eligible.</p> <p>Engineered channels and debris basins: May be eligible. The pre-disaster level of debris in the channel or basin is of particular importance to determine the amount of disaster-</p>

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	related debris.
Roads and Highways	<p>Debris may be cleared from roads and highways, including the travel lanes and shoulders, roadside ditches and drainage structures, and the maintained right-of-way.</p> <p>Clearance from Federal-aid roads and highways follows these criteria except when the Emergency Relief (ER) program of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is activated.</p> <p>Debris on undamaged sections of highway may be eligible for FEMA assistance.</p>
Recreational and Wilderness Areas	<p>Debris removal is eligible when it affects public health or safety or proper utilization of such facilities.</p> <p>Trees frequently constitute a large part of debris in these areas, and special guidance is noted below:</p> <p>Debris in wilderness or forested areas of these facilities that does not pose a health or safety threat is not eligible.</p> <p>Hazardous trees within a naturalized area of parks or golf courses that are unstable and leaning into the areas used by the public are eligible for removal only, not replacement.</p> <p>Generally, stump removal should not be considered eligible for reimbursement except when a tree eligible for replacement must be replanted in the same spot of it is determined that the stump itself would be a hazard.</p>

REFERENCES

- ◆ Debris Management Course (pilot), Reference Manual, Emergency Management Institute, FEMA.

ENDNOTES

1. Debris Management Course, Reference Manual, Emergency Management Institute, National Emergency Training Center, pages 54-59.