

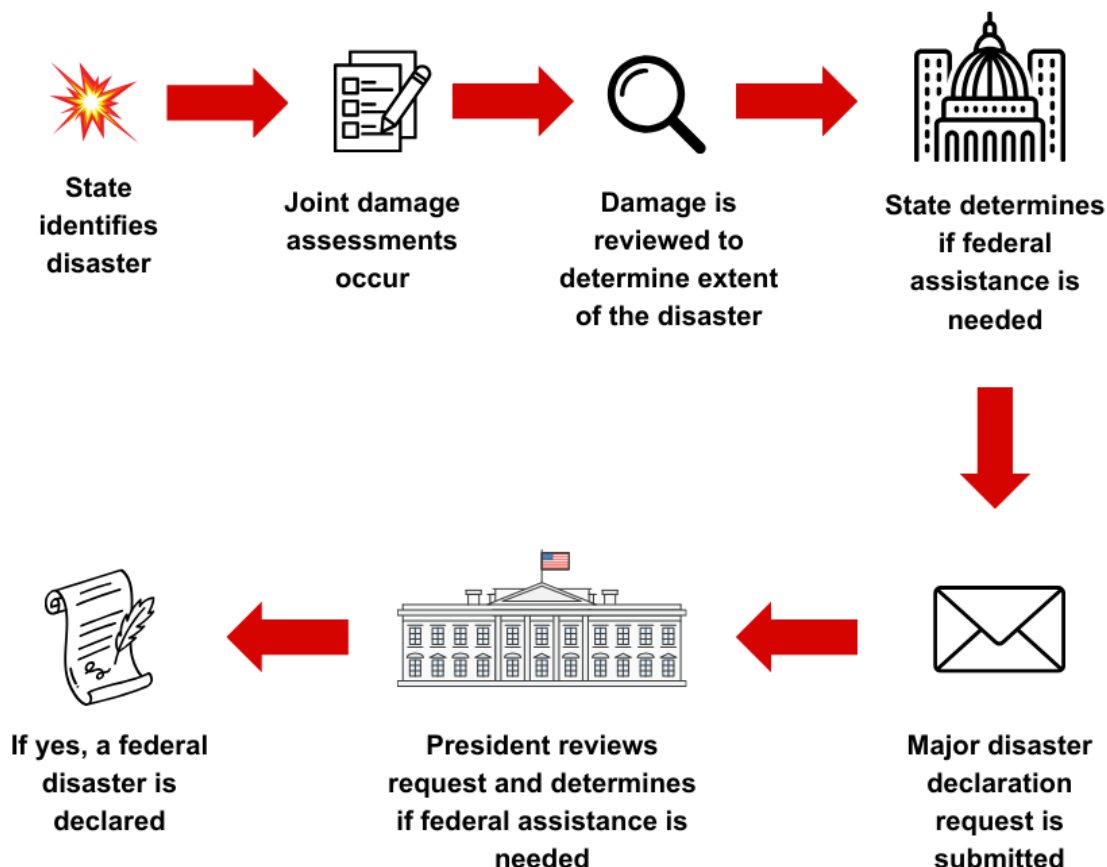


STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Frequently Asked Questions – Disaster Recovery Efforts

How a federal disaster is declared



Q: As a local municipality (e.g., city, village, town), what should we do to help our community access recovery resources?

If your community needs recovery resources, your municipal staff should contact your county emergency management office as soon as possible. The county will assess the request and, if they cannot fulfill it locally, they will escalate it to the State through Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM). This process ensures that resource needs are coordinated efficiently and through the proper emergency management channels.

Q: We have a lot of damage in our homes, what do I do?

If you haven't already done so, contact your insurance company to see if the damage is covered. Be sure to document all damage, including taking photos and keeping receipts for repairs. It is important to keep records of any estimates for repairs to your property, even if you end up deferring the work.

Pay attention to announcements from your county, local, or tribal government officials. They may ask for damage reports as well and will direct you how to do so. This is important for municipalities, counties and the state to understand the disaster's impact. This information helps officials determine community needs and allocate resources, assistance requests, and expedite the recovery process.

If officials ask you to report damages to 211 Wisconsin, that can be done by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting <https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/damage-report>.

Q: My home is damaged. Is there financial assistance available from the state to help make repairs?

The state of Wisconsin does not have a standing assistance program to help private property owners make repairs from flooding or storms. You should still report that damage to local officials and take pictures. That information will be given to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) as it works to determine whether there is enough damage for Wisconsin to request federal assistance for those who suffered damage to their primary residence.

Even if available, federal assistance for homeowners, known as individual assistance, is not intended to cover all losses caused by a disaster. This program focuses on providing financial and direct services to individuals and households to meet their basic critical needs and help them get back on their feet after a disaster.

If the state seeks and receives a federal disaster declaration, information on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Assistance Programs would be provided by the federal government and the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs Division of Emergency Management.

If you have an immediate need for assistance, please contact 211 Wisconsin.

Q: I reported damage to the county, but nobody came to look at it yet. Why not?

Make sure you reported it to the appropriate place (verify if 2-1-1 or emergency management office was contacted). If you reported damage, that information is being reviewed by local officials and it is extremely valuable for helping to assess the impact of a disaster. Depending on the situation, it may not be necessary for officials to visit all homes that reported damage. They may have simply conducted a drive by assessment to verify damage if it is apparent from the curb. If more information is needed or a request is made for a federal review of the damage, it's possible you may be contacted in the future.

Q: A state of emergency was declared. What does that mean?

A state of emergency can be declared by the Governor of Wisconsin for the state or any portion of the state they determine an emergency exists from a disaster or the imminent threat of disaster. A state of emergency in Wisconsin shall not exceed 60 days, unless it is extended by joint resolution of the legislature. It can be found under Wisconsin State Law under statute 323.10.

A state of emergency declaration provides the legal means needed to deploy resources efficiently and effectively to respond to a crisis or disaster to protect lives and property. At a state level, counties or tribes need to request the resource before it can be deployed or fulfilled.

Unless otherwise stated in the declaration, a state of emergency **DOES NOT mean**:

- Schools, businesses, or government offices close
- Driving or travel is banned
- Curfews are put in place
- The need to evacuate

Q: A letter was sent to request FEMA support after an initial damage assessment. What happens next?

Arrangements are made when FEMA would be able to assist with the preliminary damage assessment, preferably as soon as it is feasibly possible. Once availability and scheduling are coordinated, the preliminary damage assessment process begins.

This starts with a review of the data WEM has received from counties and municipalities. In addition, there will be teams assessing properties. These teams consist of FEMA, WEM, locals, and other partners to complete the process in an accurate and timely matter. This process occurs over a matter of days or longer.

Once this process is completed, a recommendation would be made to the governor's office on if the information collected would lead to a disaster declaration.

Q: I own a small business or a farm. Is there any assistance available for me right now?

Any state programs that may be available to assist small business owners would likely be announced by the governor's office or Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). Businesses may also want to contact their local economic development agency/chamber of commerce for information on local assistance that may be available.

At the federal level, information on Small Business Administration (SBA) programs will be shared when available. Agricultural producers should contact their local Farm Services Agency (FSA) office to report damage and see if any programs are available to assist them.

Q: What does the federal declaration process look like?

FEMA declares disasters through a process that involves requests from state, tribal, or territorial governments, followed by a presidential decision. The process is triggered when a disaster's severity and magnitude are deemed to exceed the response capabilities of the local and state governments, requiring federal assistance.

This starts off after a disaster occurs. A local damage assessment followed by a preliminary damage assessment, often called joint damage assessments, is done to determine the extent of the damage. After the assessments are reviewed, a recommendation is given to the governor's office if a federal disaster declaration should be requested, opening the pathway for federal assistance.

Once that is submitted, the United States president reviews the recommendation and determines if federal assistance is needed. If the president agrees with the state's submission, a federal disaster is declared.

A visual flowchart showing the process is below. You can also find more information at <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/how-declared>

Q: My home is flooding all the time, and I want the government to buy me out. How does that process work?

Receiving funding and administering a grant for a home buyout is a complex process that can take a long time to complete. Programs are not always available, and not all properties will qualify. If you are interested in a buyout, contact your local emergency management office to let them know and to get more information on what might be available. All state and federal programs require that a local community apply on your behalf (e.g. sponsor your application). The various programs available work through a local unit of government and have different requirements.

For all grant programs, a local cost share is required and must be considered before an application can begin. The local unit of government must commit to the cost share, but it can come from the property owner or other types of services.