

FEDERALLY-ASSISTED MULTIFAMILY HOUSING COMMUNITIES: **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

OLDER ADULTS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE IMPACTS OF EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS.

Older adults with low incomes can be particularly at-risk during and after a disaster event due to health conditions, limited mobility, social isolation, and restricted access to transportation and other resources.

Federally-assisted Multifamily Housing communities serving older adults with low incomes, including properties participating in HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program, can utilize the following resources before and after a disaster event.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING AND UPDATING A PLAN FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

While some HUD rental assistance programs require owners to have a disaster preparedness plan, it is a best practice for all Multifamily properties to have a plan for disasters.

HUD's Multifamily Disaster Preparedness Plan Template

In 2023, HUD released a [Multifamily Disaster Preparedness Plan Template](#) to help HUD-assisted Multifamily owners and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) produce property-specific plans to protect resident life and safety during a disaster:

- Background, Staffing, and Coordination
- Resident Protection and Safety
- Building Protection
- Business Continuity

The plan should address how to navigate resident behavior during and after a disaster, including in instances where self-evacuation is not feasible for residents or where sheltering in place is preferred.

In addition, HUD's Multifamily Housing Disaster Response Team is making progress on updating HUD's disaster response handbook chapter, known as "[Chapter 38](#)" (of the Multifamily Asset Management and Project Servicing Handbook, 4350.1, REV-1).

The forthcoming modernized handbook chapter will more clearly outline housing provider responsibilities before (and after) an emergency. LeadingAge expects the updated chapter to be out in 2025 and to include requirements for housing providers to establish and maintain a specific type of emergency response plan.

FEMA’s “OPEN” Training for Communities and Organizations

In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released a Disaster Preparedness Training for Communities and Organizations to keep key community institutions going after a disaster.

The [Organizations Preparing for Emergency Needs \(OPEN\)](#) training includes both a web-based, self-guided training, and a downloadable instructor kit that will guide participants on how to identify risks, locate resources, and take disaster preparedness actions:

- Identify the People You Serve
 - Understand Risks
 - Mitigate Risks
 - Determine Essential Activities
 - Consider the Supply Chain
 - Safeguard Critical Information
 - Establish a Communications Plan
 - Cross-Train Key Individuals
 - Formalize Plans
 - Regularly Test and Update Plans
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WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) AND THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) ARE KEY PARTNERS FOR HOUSING COMMUNITIES NAVIGATING DISASTER RESPONSE.

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster or severe weather event, federally-assisted multifamily housing properties should follow their emergency response plans. In addition, housing providers participating in HUD’s rental assistance programs can expect to take the following actions:

- **HUD’s Multifamily Housing Disaster Response team will contact properties in impacted areas to ask for “self-reporting.”**
 - Self-reporting requests are sent to the points of contact for the owner and the manager in iREMS, HUD’s rental assistance contract system; HUD reminds housing providers to keep the contact information up to date.
 - The damage self-assessment form should be filled out by all properties receiving the form, whether to report no impact, minor or moderate impact, or severe impact. This means filling out the form even if a property has not sustained any impact.
 - The self-reporting starts with simple questions about damage, power loss for more than three days, or displacement; if none occurred, the form can be simply submitted stating no impact. This is a
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- change from previous HUD practice, where properties still had to submit detailed forms even if there was no damage, which led to underreporting.
- If the property indicates that damage or displacement occurred, the form populates additional questions to assess the severity of the situation.
 - If the form indicates that moderate or severe damage occurred, HUD will go on-site to the property to continue the assessment. Similarly, if the team does not hear back from a property, they will eventually coordinate a visit to the property in person to conduct their own assessment.
 - **HUD's team will also send out a request to report "potential resources."**
 - The [potential resources](#) form is used by HUD to understand the availability of vacant units that may be able to accept displaced residents.
 - In some cases, the potential resources form is sent out prior to a disaster event as the HUD team prepares for anticipated displacement.
 - Unlike the self-reporting form on damage and displacement (which should still be filled out even if there is no property impact), properties should not submit the potential resources form if they have no vacancies.
 - **Routine HUD procedures may be suspended in the aftermath of the event.**
 - Properties that are impacted by weather events or major disaster declarations are transferred to account executives on HUD's Disaster Response Team to oversee HUD transactions and servicing until the disaster impact is considered abated for the property.
 - Routine HUD transactions, like NSPIRE inspections and MORs, are often suspended for 60 days for impacted properties. This can be extended if needed for individual properties or as a blanket extension for the area – please let LeadingAge's housing team know if more time is needed for a given situation.
 - **Assistance for Residents**
 - If the event is a Presidentially Declared Disaster (PDD), properties participating in federal rental assistance programs should check with the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) to learn which counties have been designated for disaster recovery and the corresponding declaration dates.
 - Housing providers may need to support residents eligible for individual assistance. Individuals can request [disaster help](#) by registering for assistance through FEMA's Individual Assistance Center. Applications should be submitted within sixty days of the disaster declaration.
 - Displaced residents may receive priority on waitlists for certain HUD and USDA Rural Housing Service projects if certified by FEMA as disaster victims. This can include temporary housing or, in some cases, permanent housing.
 - Per HUD rules, displaced residents are moved to the top of the waiting list in HUD Section 221(d) and HUD 236 projects for permanent rental housing, if the residents are FEMA certified as disaster victims. Other types of properties, including HUD Section 202/8s and Rural Housing Service Section 515/8, can adopt a waitlist preference related to disaster displacement.
 - HUD and HUD-assisted housing providers may also waive certain restrictions following a disaster event, including limits on number of occupants in a unit or policies related to long-term guests, as well as restrictions on use of community space.
 - Some private non-profits receiving HUD assistance may be eligible for [FEMA's Public Assistance program](#) following a disaster event.