

## **FEMA Disaster Relief Application Tips**

FEMA has declared Individual and Household Assistance for Hurricane Helene. What does this mean for you? It means that you can apply for disaster assistance from FEMA to help offset your disaster-related expenses. You can apply online at <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/> or by telephone at (800) 621-3362. Otherwise, you can download the FEMA weather app from Google PlayStore or the Apple Store and you can apply for assistance on the app and upload receipts. Whichever method you choose, the form has a few questions that are tricky. To avoid delay, please follow the following tips:

1. One of the questions that FEMA will ask when you register is whether you need assistance with Emergency Needs. Later, it will ask you if you need assistance with Critical Needs. This means during your evacuation or since staying at home during the disaster, did you have expenses for Gas, Medication, Food (meals, water, had no power and everything spoiled), Shelter (you are staying with friends, family or in a hotel); Clothing; Infant Formula, Diapers, Personal Hygiene Items, or Durable Medical Equipment (oxygen, walkers, cane, glasses, all major equipment, etc.). If this is true, say "YES" to this question. That will result in your receiving Displacement / Critical Needs Assistance.
2. When asked if your home is/was accessible, answer "NO" if there was debris, tree branches, continued flooding, loss of power, damage or destruction that prevented you from staying there after Helene. This question is asking whether you can stay at your home or apartment and will trigger the ability for you to receive assistance to pay for hotels or provide funding to use while you stay with family or friends.
3. When asked if utilities are out, say "YES" even if your utilities were out for a few days. This triggers assistance \$ to stay somewhere other than your home or to buy fuel to power a generator.
4. When asked "Are you willing to relocate" say "YES" if you cannot live in your home due to damage, loss of power, etc. This question means you are willing to stay in a hotel or apartment **temporarily**, and triggers that funding for you. It is not asking if you are willing to move away from your home permanently.
5. If you bought a home safety item FEMA may reimburse you under certain conditions, but you must submit the receipt.

Save your receipts, take photographs, and keep any other evidence you have of Helene-related damage and expenses.