



*Elevated lake levels and wave hazards continue to threaten communities along the Great Lakes. Understanding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster declaration process and programmatic requirements can help communities more efficiently respond to and recover from a disaster.*

## Declaration Process for Public Assistance

After a disaster, tribal or local officials are the first responders who protect the community's health and safety. In some cases, a state of emergency may be declared to provide additional resources.

If damage to public infrastructure is beyond tribal, state and local capabilities, damage assessment data and supporting documentation may be used to request joint FEMA-State or FEMA-Tribal Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) for Public Assistance (PA).

The tribe or state then coordinates with FEMA staff to conduct the PDA. They begin by defining the incident and period when damage was sustained. Keep in mind: federal law requires FEMA to consider singular events, and not seasons, cyclical conditions or multiple events over an extended time period.

The Public Assistance PDA teams also consider multiple factors, including damage to public infrastructure and impact to government services as well as the community. All data collected during the PDAs is then provided to the tribe or state.

If it is determined that the losses are beyond tribal or state and local capabilities, the tribe or state may submit a formal disaster declaration request to the FEMA regional office. FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security headquarters offices refer the request to the President. If a major disaster declaration is approved, it could make available funding through FEMA's PA Program to aid public and certain non-profit entities for emergency work and/or the repair or replacement of infrastructure and tribal or public facilities.



## Public Assistance Cost Considerations

Eligible work must be as a result of the disaster, within the declared area and the legal responsibility of the eligible applicant. Eligible work is classified into the following categories:

### Emergency Work

Category A: Debris removal

Category B: Emergency protective measures

Emergency work includes actions taken immediately to save lives, protect public health, safety or improved property, and/or eliminate an immediate threat of additional damage. **Eligible work must be specific to the incident or in anticipation of the incident.**

### Permanent Work

Category C: Roads and bridges

Category D: Water control facilities

Category E: Public buildings and contents

Category F: Public utilities

Category G: Parks, recreational, and other facilities

Permanent work is work required to restore a facility to its pre-disaster design. For additional information about eligible work and costs under the PA program, visit [www.fema.gov/public-assistance-policy-and-guidance](http://www.fema.gov/public-assistance-policy-and-guidance).

### Other Types of FEMA Assistance:

- **Individual Assistance:** aid to individuals and households, and/or
- **Hazard Mitigation Assistance:** funding for measures designed to reduce future losses to public and private property