

- How, why, and when you believe you were discriminated against. Include as much background information as possible about the alleged acts of discrimination. Include names of individuals whom you allege discriminated against you, if you know them.
- The names of any persons, if known, that FEMA could contact for additional information to support or clarify your allegations.

What will FEMA do with my complaint?

Once a complaint is filed, it will be reviewed by FEMA to determine whether it has jurisdiction to investigate the issues you have raised. If your complaint is accepted, FEMA will investigate it and attempt to resolve any violations that are found. If negotiations to correct a violation are unsuccessful, enforcement proceedings may be instituted.

What if I am retaliated against for asserting my rights or filing a complaint?

You should be aware that a recipient or a Federal agency is prohibited from retaliating against you or any person because he or she opposed an unlawful policy or practice, or made charges, testified, or participated in any complaint action under a Civil Rights law. If you believe that you have been retaliated against, you should immediately contact FEMA's Office of Equal Rights.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Office of Equal Rights

**Your Civil Rights
And Disaster Assistance**

“The distribution of supplies, the processing of applications, and other relief and assistance activities shall be accomplished in an equitable and impartial manner, without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, or economic status.”

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, P. L. 93-288, as amended



Federal Emergency Management Agency
Office of Equal Rights
500 C Street S.W., Room 407
Washington DC 20472

(202) 646-3535
(202) 646-2745 (TTY/TDD)
(202) 646-4320 (FAX)

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (Stafford Act) is the law that authorizes Federal assistance when the President declares a State to be a disaster area. Section 308 of the Stafford Act protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of their race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, or economic status in all disaster assistance programs. Section 309 of the Stafford Act applies these nondiscrimination provisions to all private relief organizations participating in the response and recovery effort.

In addition, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of their race, color, or national origin in programs that receive Federal financial assistance. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a Federal law that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in all programs receiving funds from the Federal government or operated by the Federal government.

What forms of discrimination are prohibited by Civil Rights laws?

There are many forms of illegal discrimination that can limit the opportunity of people to gain equal access to services and programs. Among other things, in operating a FEMA-assisted program, a recipient (state or local government or agency that receives Federal disaster funds from FEMA) cannot, on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, or economic status, either directly or through contractual means:

- Deny program services, aids, or benefits;
- Provide a different service, aid, or benefit, or provide them in a manner different than they are provided to others; or,

- Segregate or separately treat individuals in any matter related to the receipt of any service, aid, or benefit.

These prohibitions also apply to FEMA itself in its operation of Federally conducted programs.

What if I have a Civil Rights complaint?

Each Federal agency that provides Federal financial assistance is responsible for investigating complaints of discrimination in the use of its funds.

If you believe that you or others protected by Civil Rights laws have been discriminated against in receiving disaster assistance, you may contact one of FEMA's Equal Rights Officers (ERO), who has the job of ensuring equal access to all FEMA disaster programs. The ERO will attempt to resolve your issues. You may reach the ERO by calling FEMA's Helpline at (800) 525-0321.

If the matter is not resolved, you may file a complaint with FEMA. A signed, written complaint should be sent to the Office of Equal Rights, generally within 180 days of the date of the alleged discrimination.

The complaint must include:

- Your name, address, and telephone number. Your complaint must be signed. If you are filing on behalf of another person, include your name, address, telephone number, and your relationship to that person (e.g., friend, attorney, parent, etc.).
- The name and address of the agency, institution, or department you believe discriminated against you.