TENNESSEE WILDFIRE DISASTER

The Great Smoky Mountains in eastern Tennessee were ravaged by wildfires the past two weeks. The fire spread quickly, driven by drought conditions and intense winds that blew embers from the national park into nearby towns. According to Gatlinburg officials, 14 people are confirmed dead and a further 134 have been treated at the hospital. NBC NEWS reports “the human-caused main fire was at 17,006 acres and was 42 percent contained Sunday night... It's expected to continue smoldering overnight before rain forecast for Monday helps to slow its spread.”¹ More than 14,000 people, including residents and tourists, were forced to evacuate. More than 1600 buildings were destroyed and over 2,000 people are still without power.

More than 700 firefighters are currently fighting Chimney Tops 2 fire and other smaller wildfires. Fox59 reports that homeowners have begun returning to Gatlinburg. Almost 1000 people are on-site to help, along with 46 fire engines, six helicopters, and five bulldozers. Emergency crews are working to restore utilities and to allow the city’s roads to reopen.²

This supplement provides general information for those affected by the fires about current fire containment and immediate relief efforts. For post crisis assistance in rebuilding housing and communities affected by the fires, see the Housing Assistance Council’s report *Picking Up the Pieces: Restoring Rural Housing and Communities After a Disaster*.

Relief Efforts

Disaster Assistance Available from FEMA:

**Housing Needs**

- **Temporary Housing** (a place to live for a limited period of time): Financial assistance may be available to homeowners or renters to rent a different place to live, or assistance can be a government provided housing unit when rental properties are not available. Search for information about housing rental resources.
- **Lodging Expenses Reimbursement**: Reimbursement of hotel expenses for homeowners or renters may be available for short periods of time due to inaccessibility or utility outage if not covered by insurance or any other program.
- **Repair**: Financial assistance may be available to homeowners to repair damage from the disaster to their primary residence that is not covered by insurance. The goal is to make the damaged home safe, sanitary, and functional.
- **Replacement**: Financial assistance may be available to homeowners to replace their home destroyed in the disaster that is not covered by insurance. The goal is to help the homeowner with the cost of replacing their destroyed home.
- **Permanent or Semi-Permanent Housing Construction**: Direct assistance or money for the construction of a home. This type of help occurs only in insular areas or other locations specified by FEMA, where no other type of housing assistance is possible.

*What specific items are covered by "Housing Needs" assistance?*

*Do I qualify for "Housing Needs" Assistance?*

Other Needs

Financial Assistance may be available for necessary expenses and serious needs caused by the disaster. This includes:

- Disaster-related child care expenses.
- Disaster-related medical and dental expenses.
- Disaster-related funeral and burial expenses.
- Disaster-related damages to essential household items (room furnishings, appliances); clothing; tools (specialized or protective clothing and equipment) required for your job; necessary educational materials (computers, school books, supplies).
- Fuels for primary heat source (heating oil, gas).
- Clean-up items (wet/dry vacuum, dehumidifier).
- Disaster-related damage to an essential vehicle.
- Moving and storage expenses related to the disaster (moving and storing property to avoid additional disaster damage while disaster-related repairs are being made to the home).
- Other necessary expenses or serious needs as determined by FEMA.
- Other expenses that are authorized by law.

Do I qualify for "Other than Housing Needs" Assistance?

Additional FEMA Services

- Crisis Counseling
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance
- Legal Services
- Special Tax Considerations

FEMA has Disaster Recovery Centers across the country, which are readily accessible facilities or mobile offices where applicants may go for information about FEMA or other disaster assistance programs, or for questions related to your case. Search online for a Disaster Recovery Center [http://asd.fema.gov/inter/locator/home.htm](http://asd.fema.gov/inter/locator/home.htm) or by smart phone or tablet at [http://asd.fema.gov/inter/locator/mobile.htm](http://asd.fema.gov/inter/locator/mobile.htm)

Apply for FEMA Assistance online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or by smart phone or tablet at [m.fema.gov](http://m.fema.gov) or Apply/Check your status by phone 1-800-621-3362.

Red Cross Relief Efforts: The American Red Cross has launched an interactive online map that consolidates multiple sources of disaster data into a real-time, interactive tool to get information and updates about the Western Wildfires.

The map provides the following information:

- Location and size of wildfires
- Evacuation zones
- Road Closures
- Location, address and population of shelters
- Where to take evacuated pets and animals (large and small)
- Standard map elements such as counties, cities, roads, rivers and mountain ranges
- Demographic information.

The link to the resource is: [http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire](http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire)
For more information contact:

Tennessee Division of Forestry Resources

For fire news: https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/article/ag-forests-wildfire

For the Pigeon Forge Fire Department: http://www.cityofpigeonforge.com/fire-department.aspx

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Toll-free helpline: 1-800-3362

For hearing impaired callers only: 1-800-462-7585 (TTY), 1-800-621-3362 (Video Relay Service)

Operators are multilingual and calls are answered seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CDT.

American Red Cross Disaster Service

For referrals and updates on Red Cross shelter services in your area, locate a local Red Cross office through: http://www.redcross.org/find-help or by calling the Public Inquiry Center at 1-800-214-0441.

Additional Resources

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Tennessee State Office
Bobby Mack Goode, State Director
3322 West End Avenue, Suite 300
Nashville, TN 37203-1071
Voice: (615) 783-1300
Fax: (855) 776-7057
https://www.rd.usda.gov/tn

US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Knoxville Field Office
John J. Duncan Federal Building
710 Locust Street, Third Floor
Knoxville, TN 37902-2526

Phone: (865) 545-4370
Fax: (865) 545-4569
TTY: (865) 545-4559
Email: tn_webmanager@hud.gov