

§744. Disaster relief

1. Financial assistance to individuals. Whenever the President has declared a major disaster to exist in this State, the Governor may:

A. Accept a grant of financial assistance from the Federal Government, subject to such terms and conditions as may be imposed upon the grant and upon the Governor's determination that financial assistance is essential to meet necessary expenses or serious needs of individuals or families caused by the disaster that cannot otherwise adequately be met; [RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §46 (COR).]

B. Enter into an agreement with the Federal Government, or any officer or agency thereof, pledging the State to participate in up to 25% of the financial assistance authorized in this subsection. If state funds are not otherwise available, the Governor may accept an advance of the state's share from the Federal Government to be repaid when the State is able to do so; and [PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

C. Notwithstanding any other provision of law or regulation, make financial grants to meet necessary expenses or serious needs of individuals or families caused by the disaster that cannot otherwise adequately be met. A grant to an individual or family may not exceed in the aggregate for any single major disaster declared by the President the amount established by the Federal Government for the limit on grants to individuals under any federal disaster assistance program for individuals and families. [PL 2003, c. 404, §8 (AMD).]
[RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §46 (COR).]

2. Community disaster loans.
[PL 1985, c. 794, Pt. A, §4 (RP).]

2-A. Assistance to local governmental units. Assistance to local governmental units shall be governed as follows.

A. Whenever the President of the United States declares that a major disaster exists in the State, the Governor may:

(1) Apply for a public assistance grant from the Federal Government under Public Law 93-288 on behalf of both the State and local governmental units for the purposes of repairing or replacing publicly owned facilities within the disaster area or relocating public facilities outside of the disaster area;

(2) Obligate state financial resources, as a condition for receiving such a federal grant, up to, but not in excess of, 25% of the total public assistance requested; and

(3) Enter into an agreement with the affected local governmental units to obligate local financial resources up to, but not in excess of, 10% of the total cost of damage to local public facilities, provided that the local share shall not exceed 10% of total local annual operating budget, exclusive of educational budgets. [PL 1985, c. 794, Pt. A, §5 (NEW).]

B. If the President of the United States declares that a major disaster exists in the State, the Governor may:

(1) Apply for a loan from the Federal Government on behalf of a unit of local government if the Governor determines that the unit will suffer a substantial loss of tax and other revenues as a result of a major disaster and has demonstrated a need for financial assistance to perform its governmental functions;

(2) Receive and disburse the proceeds of any approved loan to an applicant local government;

(3) Determine the amount needed by any applicant local government to restore or resume its governmental functions and certify the amount to the Federal Government, except that no

application amount may exceed 25% of the annual operating budget of the applicant for the fiscal year in which the major disaster occurs; and

(4) Recommend to the Federal Government, based upon the Governor's review, the cancellation of all or any part of repayment when, after 3 full fiscal years following the major disaster, the revenues of the local government are insufficient to meet its operating expenses, including additional municipal expenses related to the disaster. [RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §47 (COR).]

[RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §47 (COR).]

3. Temporary housing. Temporary housing may be provided as follows.

A. Whenever the Governor has proclaimed a disaster emergency under the laws of this State, or the President has declared an emergency or a major disaster to exist in this State, the Governor may:

(1) Enter into purchase, lease or other arrangements with any agency of the United States for temporary housing units to be occupied by disaster victims and make these units available to any political subdivision of the State;

(2) Assist any political subdivision of the State, in which is located temporary housing for disaster victims, acquire sites necessary for the temporary housing and do all things required to prepare the sites to accommodate temporary housing units. This may be accomplished by advancing or lending funds available to the Governor from any appropriation made by the Legislature or from any other source, and "passing through" funds made available by any agency, public or private; or by becoming a partner with the political subdivision for the execution and performance of any temporary housing project for disaster victims. For those purposes, the Governor may pledge the credit of the State on terms that the Governor considers appropriate, having due regard for current debt transactions of the State; and

(3) Suspend or modify a state health, safety, zoning, transportation or other requirement of law or rule when the Governor considers suspension or modification necessary to provide temporary housing for disaster victims. That suspension or modification must be in accordance with rules adopted by the Governor and may not exceed 60 days' duration. [RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §48 (COR).]

B. Any political subdivision of this State is expressly authorized to acquire, temporarily or permanently, by purchase, lease or otherwise, sites required for installation of temporary housing units for disaster victims, and to enter into whatever arrangements, including purchase of temporary housing units and payment of transportation charges, which are necessary to prepare or equip those sites to accommodate the housing units. [PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

[RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §48 (COR).]

4. Debris removal in major disasters. In major disasters, debris may be removed as follows.

A. Whenever the Governor has declared a disaster emergency to exist under the laws of this State, or the President has declared a major disaster or emergency to exist in this State, the Governor may:

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, through the use of state departments or agencies or the use of any of the state's instrumentalities, clear or remove from publicly-owned or privately-owned land or water, debris and wreckage that may threaten public health or safety, or public or private property;

(2) Accept funds from the Federal Government and utilize those funds to make grants to any local government for the purpose of removing debris or wreckage from publicly-owned or privately-owned land or water; and

(3) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, agree to indemnify the Federal Government against any claim arising from debris and wreckage removal from private property. [PL 2003, c. 404, §9 (AMD).]

B. The following conditions apply to the execution of removal or clearance.

(1) Authority under this subsection shall not be exercised unless the affected local government, corporation, organization or individual first presents an unconditional authorization for removal of the debris or wreckage from public and private property, and, in the case of removal of debris or wreckage from private property, also first agrees to indemnify the State Government against any claim arising from that removal.

(2) Whenever the Governor provides for clearance of debris or wreckage pursuant to paragraph A, employees of the designated state agencies or individuals appointed by the State are authorized to enter upon private land or waters and perform any tasks necessary to the removal or clearance operation.

(3) Except in cases of willful misconduct, gross negligence or bad faith, any state employee or agent complying with orders of the Governor and performing duties pursuant thereto under this section shall not be liable for death of or injury to persons or damage to property occurring during performance of those duties. [PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

[PL 2003, c. 404, §9 (AMD).]

5. Terms. As used in this section, "major disaster," "emergency" and "temporary housing" have the same meaning as in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended.

[PL 2001, c. 662, §80 (AMD).]

6. Rules. The Governor shall make rules necessary for carrying out this section, including, but not limited to, standards of eligibility for persons applying for benefits; procedures for applying for and administration of relief; methods of investigation, filing and approving applications and formation of local or statewide boards to pass upon applications and procedures for appeals.

[PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

7. Authority not limited. Nothing contained in this section may be construed to limit the Governor's authority to apply for, administer and expend any grants, gifts or payments in aid of disaster prevention, preparedness, response or recovery.

[PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

8. Penalty. Any person who knowingly makes a misstatement of fact in connection with an application for financial assistance under this section is guilty of a Class D crime.

[PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW).]

9. Application. This section does not apply to federal funds received under section 746.

[PL 2021, c. 1, Pt. BB, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 460, §3 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 794, §§A4,5 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 662, §§79,80 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 404, §§8,9 (AMD). RR 2019, c. 1, Pt. B, §§46-48 (COR). PL 2021, c. 1, Pt. BB, §1 (AMD).

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