



# FEMA RECOVERY FUNDING FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

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*How City of Administrative Officer Helps Secure a  
Stronger and Safer Future for All*

When disaster strikes, cities like Los Angeles rely on the federal government to help fund recovery. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supports local efforts by covering parts of the cost for cleanup, emergency response, rebuilding, and future risk reduction. But this funding isn't automatic. It requires detailed paperwork, strict timelines, and coordination with state and federal partners.

This fact sheet explains how FEMA recovery programs work, what kinds of projects they support, and how the City Administrative Officer (CAO) helps bring this critical funding home to Los Angeles.



## ▶ **HOW FEMA RECOVERY FUNDING WORKS**

When a disaster causes damage beyond what local and state budgets can cover, cities and states turn to the federal government for recovery funding. FEMA helps pay for cleanup, emergency response, repairs, and rebuilding. FEMA helps cover these costs, but this is not automatic or immediate. Recovery funding must go through a formal approval process with strict federal rules, detailed documentation requirements, and firm deadlines at each step. This includes initial damage assessments, project scoping, site inspections, cost approval, and final reimbursement.

The CAO coordinates Los Angeles' role in this work. That includes helping city departments submit funding requests, track progress, and stay in compliance so the city can be reimbursed.

There are two main programs FEMA uses to support local recovery

## 1 PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

This program helps pay for the costs of debris removal, emergency response, and restoring public infrastructure. It covers things like:

- Clearing debris from streets and public spaces
- Repairing roads, bridges, and public buildings
- Replacing damaged equipment or utilities
- Emergency actions like evacuations and fire suppression

### UPGRADING FOR THE NEXT DISASTER

An important part of Public Assistance is the option to make repairs stronger than before. When the city fixes damaged roads, buildings, or utilities, it can include improvements that help protect against future disasters. These upgrades must reduce future risk, make sense financially, and follow FEMA's rules.

For example, a damaged energy system might be rebuilt with stronger materials, placed on higher ground, or protected with flood barriers. These added steps help the city avoid bigger losses the next time disaster strikes and ensure a strong investment of taxpayer dollars to help avoid future costly disasters in the future.

### ACCESSING FUNDS

FEMA usually reimburses 75 percent of eligible costs. The remaining share is split between the state and the city. But to access that funding, local governments must submit detailed claims according to FEMA's rules. The CAO helps departments prepare those claims, gather documentation, and keep each project moving. Learn more about FEMA's Public Assistance recovery funding program by visiting <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public>.

## 2 HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

This program helps communities build back in ways that reduce future disaster risk. These projects are forward-looking and often more complex, but they are essential to long-term resilience for the city in the face of future earthquakes, wildfire, extreme heat and beyond. Examples of mitigation projects include:

- Strengthening buildings to withstand fire and earthquakes
- Upgrading power and water systems
- Creating fire breaks and flood protections
- Installing backup generators and alert systems

### STRENGTHENING WHAT'S STILL STANDING

This grant program can support projects that were not physically damaged in the disaster. The purpose of this funding is to mitigate against future natural hazard events, not repair what was lost. That means a building, system, or whole area that withstood the Los Angeles wildfires can still qualify for funding to make it resilient when it faces serious natural risks in the future.

### ACCESSING FUNDS

The CAO helps identify and submit these proposals as part of the city's plan to build long-term resilience. Each project must show how it reduces risk, saves future costs, and aligns with state and federal priorities. Each project must align with the goals and actions outlined in the city's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan to be eligible for funding. The CAO helps shape and submit these proposals to FEMA through the state. You can learn more about this program by visiting <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/hazard-mitigation>.

## ▶ CAO'S ROLE

The CAO has an important role in supporting wildfire recovery. As a citywide partner, we lead the city's coordination with FEMA and the State of California on recovery to apply for, secure and implement dollars from both Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding. The office does not run construction projects or emergency services directly, but it plays a behind-the-scenes role that is vital to success. This includes:

- Tracking damages, costs, and paperwork across City Departments
- Managing FEMA and state documentation for each funding request
- Guiding departments through complex rules and updates
- Providing technical and policy support
- Monitoring progress and outcomes across the recovery timeline

Without this central coordination, the process breaks down. Delays grow, reimbursements are denied, and money can be lost.