PISGAH LEGAL SERVICES

WHAT TO DO IF FEMA ASKS YOU FOR MONEY BACK

After a disaster, FEMA provides funds to survivors to meet urgent needs.

If FEMA later determines an individual received the wrong amount of money or that they were not eligible to receive FEMA assistance, FEMA sends a ***notice of potential debt letter*** stating that money must be repaid.

This is called **FEMA Recoupment**.

Why FEMA Recoupment Happens

Accounting Errors

FEMA made a mistake or gave an incorrect amount

Insurance Payouts

Insurance paid for the same expenses later

Eligibility Issues

For example, you did not own the home or it was not your primary residence

If You Receive a Notice

Carefully review the letter. It's critical to carefully consider FEMA's reasoning to decide whether you disagree. The letter should specify:

- The type of assistance FEMA believes you were ineligible or overpaid for
- Why FEMA made the decision

Do not ignore FEMA's attempt to collect. This could result in:

- FEMA garnishing your income (including Social Security)
- A debt collector pursuing the money you owe
- The Department of Treasury seizing your tax refund

FEMA is authorized to approve payment plans. Contact FEMA to discuss options that may work for you if you cannot afford to pay the money you owe.

Apply for a debt waiver. If you cannot repay the funds even with a payment plan, you can write a letter explaining why you should qualify for a debt waiver (for example, if the overpayment was entirely FEMA's fault and it would be unfair for them to make you repay the funds).

DISAGREE WITH FEMA'S DECISION?
SEE BACK →

BEWARE OF SCAMS!

If you receive a notice of potential debt letter, **make sure it is actually from FEMA** and not from a scammer. To confirm it's from FEMA, you should:

- **Check your FEMA Online Account**
- **Contact the FEMA Recoupment Hotline:** 1-800-816-1122

If You Disagree with FEMA's Decision, You Can Appeal

Write an appeal letter. The letter, typed or handwritten, should be accurate, complete, and truthful. Making false statements to FEMA is a violation of federal law.

It must be submitted within 60 days of the date on the notice. Read the letter carefully to learn how to request a hearing to speak with FEMA.

Include with the Letter:

- **An explanation** for why FEMA was correct to provide assistance ***for each reason*** listed in the debt letter
- **Supporting documentation,** such as proof of primary residence or invoices/receipts showing how you used FEMA funds
- **A copy of your driver's license or ID card**
- **All information from your FEMA application,** including your name, address, birthdate, telephone number, disaster number, and FEMA application number (Most of this can be found at the top of the notice of potential debt letter)
- If everything in your letter is accurate to the best of your knowledge, **include this statement before your signature**: "*I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.*"

CONTACT PISGAH LEGAL SERVICES FOR HELP

828-253-0406 | pisgahlegal.org

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