

Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery

A step-by-step guide for individuals and families affected by Hurricane Sandy



Working Together for Strong Communities

Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery was developed jointly by NeighborWorks America and the FDIC. The purpose of the guide is to assist families in establishing stable and secure housing as they recover from devastating natural disasters.

NeighborWorks America

For 35 years, NeighborWorks America has created opportunities for people to improve their lives and strengthen their communities by providing access to homeownership and to safe and affordable rental housing. Created by Congress, NeighborWorks creates opportunities for lower-income people to live in affordable homes in safe, sustainable neighborhoods that are healthy places for families to grow. NeighborWorks delivers many of its community-focused programs and services through the national NeighborWorks network — more than 235 independent, community-based nonprofit organizations serving more than 4,500 communities nationwide. Together with its national and local partners, NeighborWorks provides grants, programmatic support, training and technical assistance, and in the last five years, has generated more than \$19.5 billion in reinvestment in these communities. Additionally, NeighborWorks America is the nation's leading trainer of community development and affordable housing professionals.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

Congress created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in 1933 to restore public confidence in the nation's banking system. The FDIC insures deposits at the nation's banks and savings associations, and promotes the safety and soundness of these institutions by identifying, monitoring and addressing risks to which they are exposed. Included within the Corporation's mission is the responsibility for encouraging financial institutions to invest in their communities.

As an independent agency of the federal government, the FDIC receives no tax dollars — it is funded by premiums that banks and thrift institutions pay for deposit insurance coverage and from earnings on investments in U.S. Treasury securities. The FDIC currently insures more than \$9 trillion of deposits in U.S. banks and thrifts.

The FDIC directly examines and supervises more than 4,500 banks and savings banks for operational safety and soundness, more than half of the institutions in the banking system. Banks can be chartered by the states or by the federal government. Banks chartered by states also have the choice of whether to join the Federal Reserve System. The FDIC is the primary federal regulator of banks that are chartered by the states that do not join the Federal Reserve System. In addition, the FDIC is the back-up supervisor for the remaining insured banks and thrift institutions.

Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery

*A step-by-step guide for individuals and families
affected by Hurricane Sandy*

Made possible with support from



We make home possibleSM

and



Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery was created by:

NeighborWorks® America

Project Oversight:

Jayna Bower, Director-NCHEC
Karen Hoskins, Training and Curriculum Manager, NCHEC
Fred Zeytoonjian, Senior Advisor, Rebuilding Communities

Project Development Manager:

Donna Tally, NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center Coordinator

Lead Researcher: James Madden

Consultants: Doris Barrell, Kevin Flanagan, Anne Gass, Karen Murrell, Inger Richard

Editing and Coordination: Amy Christian

Design, Illustration and Production: Jeff Miller (illustration), Jim Powers, Dan Yokum, Virginia Marques,
Mike Schumacher and James K. Boodley

FDIC

Project Oversight:

Lee Bowman, National Coordinator for Community Affairs
Angelisa Harris, Senior Community Affairs Specialist and FDIC Project Manager

Research and Development:

Joan Lok, Community Affairs Specialist
Terry Lee, Community Affairs Specialist
Dennis Myers, LMIS Technician
John Olsen, Community Affairs Specialist

Design and Production:

Patricia Hughes, Chief, Graphic Design Unit
Sam Collicchio, Senior Designer

2013 Update For Hurricane Sandy

Project Development Manager: Tosin Durotoye, Program Manager – NCHEC

Project Research and Development: Aubria Corbitt, Consultant

Content Consultants:

Keith Getter, Management Consultant – NeighborWorks America
Laura Barriere, Project Manager – NCHEC
Amy Ford, Program Specialist – NCHEC

Reviewers:

Center for New York City Neighborhoods
New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
Pratt Area Community Council
Asian Americans For Equality
Community Development Corporation of Long Island
New York State Homes and Community Renewal
Margert Community Corporation

Graphic Design: GO! Creative, LLC, www.go-creative.net



**EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY**

Copyright © 2006 by NeighborWorks® America and FDIC.

First edition July 2006. Second edition September 2006. Third edition October 2006.

Fourth edition November 2006. Fifth edition February 2013.

How To Use This Guide


Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery is a comprehensive guide to resources and steps to take for those affected by Hurricane Sandy. While the devastation caused by Sandy was large, so has been the disaster recovery response from individuals and organizations. Every day there are more helping hands. The information in this guide will help you make sound decisions on your way to housing recovery.


There are three types of information in this guide:


- general disaster recovery information,
- guidance and resources for those with a clear housing recovery goal, and
- guidance and resources for those still deciding on their housing recovery goal.


Understanding that not every section of the guide will be helpful or relevant to everyone, we have developed a system to point you to those sections of the guide that best fit your situation.


The keys to this system are the maps in the first section (Route 1) of the guide. These maps are designed to help you determine your housing recovery goal — whether to rebuild or repair, rent, relocate, buy or sell. Choose the map that best reflects your housing goal. If your housing goal is unclear at this time, use the Road Map for Undecided. Note that each map contains one of the following symbols (square, triangle, rectangle, etc.) at the top.


 **Road Map for Rebuilding a Home** — This map is for the homeowner who needs to access all the assistance and resources needed to rebuild his or her house from the ground up.


 **Road Map for Repairing a Home** — This map is for the homeowner who needs to access all the assistance and resources needed to repair his or her house to its pre-hurricane condition or better.

 **Road Map for Relocating** — This map is for the homeowner who wants to relocate within the state he or she was living in prior to the hurricanes.

 **Road Map for Selling Your Home** — This map is for the homeowner who wants to sell the property owned in a hurricane affected area.

 **Road Map for Undecided** — This map is for those who have not yet decided which of the maps above might be the most suited to their ultimate destination.

 **Road Map for Buying a Home** — This map is for the renter or previous homeowner who wants to buy a home in the hurricane affected area.

 **Road Map for Renting a Home** — This map is for the renter or previous homeowner who is looking for rental property in the hurricane affected area.

The table of contents for Route 2 of the guide is coded with the map symbols so you can see the sections of the guide that are most relevant to the map you've selected. This will save you time in navigating to those sections of the guide that apply to your needs. Safe travels!

Introduction to Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery

Help is on the way...

This guide will introduce you to both the assistance that is available now and the assistance that is planned for the future. It will introduce you to the service delivery network that will distribute aid and information in the coming months. Many of the agencies providing resources existed before Hurricane Sandy. Others have been newly formed to respond to the increased demands and urgent needs resulting from the devastation the hurricane left behind. As you journey toward housing recovery, you will notice that the Internet is critical for access to the most up-to-date information that you will need. Continue to check the Web for updates to this guide.

It's never too early to chart your course...

Good information is the key to good decision-making. The purpose of *Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery* is to provide the individuals and families who were devastated by the storm with essential information needed to begin housing recovery. It is divided into four sections:

- Route 1: Mapping Your Road to Housing Recovery — decision maps to help you decide on a housing recovery goal**
- Route 2: Introducing Your Roadside Assistance Crew — key disaster recovery resources and information**
- Route 3: Making Informed Decisions and Steering Clear of Warning Signs — resources to keep you on track**
- Route 4: Resource Guide for Finding the Assistance Crew Nearest You — New Jersey and New York resources**

This guide will help you...

If you have already begun to repair or rebuild your home, or if you are planning to do so soon, *Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery* is written for you. If you were a renter when the storm hit and have been displaced from your home, you will find some resources in this guide, and as the recovery progresses, more will become available. If you owned a house that you were forced out of by the storm, but have not yet made a decision to repair or rebuild, the information in this guide can help you to make an informed decision.

There will be bumps along the road...

Hurricane Sandy forever changed the physical landscape of the communities it devastated and the way we think about hurricane risks. We now understand that far more of our country is vulnerable to the damage hurricanes cause than was previously believed. Much of the necessary groundwork to begin large- and small-scale rebuilding in the areas affected by Hurricane Sandy remains to be done, but it is not too early to begin your planning.

Remember — before starting out on any journey, you should decide on your destination, pick up a good map, find your most trusted travel companions, and mark the pit stops along the way. Successfully navigating the road to housing recovery works much the same way. So, pack up your bags and let's hit the road!

Table of Contents for Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery

Linking Your Road Map to Helpful Information in Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery:


- Road Map for Rebuilding a Home 
- Road Map for Repairing a Home 
- Road Map for Relocating 
- Road Map for Selling Your Home 
- Road Map for Undecided 
- Road Map for Buying a Home 
- Road Map for Renting a Home 
- Applies to Everyone 


How to Use this Guide v


Introduction to Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery vii


Route 1. Mapping Your Road to Housing Recovery


Introduction3


Road Map for Rebuilding a Home 4


Road Map for Repairing a Home 5

Road Map for Relocating 6

Road Map for Selling Your Home 7


Road Map for Undecided 8


Road Map for Buying a Home 9


Road Map for Renting a Home 10


Route 2. Introducing Your Roadside Assistance Crew

FEMA: “What’s In It for You?”13


What Does FEMA Offer? 13


Am I Eligible for FEMA Assistance? 14

Disaster Assistance for Those With Insurance 16

Applying for FEMA Assistance 17

Disaster Recovery Centers 18

Additional Sources of Help 19

Flood Insurance Requirements  20

Flood Zones and Flood Maps	▲ ■	20
What the Flood Maps Mean to You	▲ ■	20
Building Codes: “Don’t Fight City Hall!”	▲ ■	22
Obtaining a Building Permit	▲ ■	22
State Programs: “Understanding My State’s Recovery Assistance Resources”		24
New Jersey (NJ Residents Only)		24
New Jersey Counties Eligible for FEMA Individual Assistance		24
New York (NY Residents Only)		25
New York Counties Eligible for FEMA Individual Assistance		26
The Insurance Industry: “Securing the Rebuild”		27
Confused by the Fine Print? The Nuts & Bolts of Insurance	ⓔ	28
Types of Insurance	ⓔ	28
Sources of Insurance	ⓔ	34
National Flood Insurance Program	▲ ■ ◆ ■	35
Alternative State Pools and Corporations	▲ ■ ◆ ■	35
Need Help Now? Navigating the Claims Process	▲ ■ ■	35
Understanding Disaster-Specific Damage	▲ ■	36
Damage to Your Home During a Storm: What Insurance Covers What Damage?	▲ ■	38
Sample Homeowners Policy: The Declarations Page	ⓔ	41
Preparing and Submitting Your Insurance Claim	ⓔ	42
When Things Go Right: Settling Damage Claims and Moving Ahead with Repairs	▲ ■	44
Have a Complaint or Can’t Get an Answer? When Things Go Wrong	ⓔ	49
What If I Can’t Reach an Agreement with My Insurance Company?	ⓔ	50
How Does the Mediation Process Work?	ⓔ	51
State Insurance Regulators	ⓔ	53
Just Beginning Your Search? Acquiring Insurance	ⓔ	54
Definitions of Insurance Terms	ⓔ	59
The Financial Community: “Bridging the Gap Through Financial Tools and Products”		61
“Help — I Can’t Pay My Mortgage!”	▲ ■ ● ◆ ■ ■	61
The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions	▲ ■ ● ◆ ■	63
HUD Foreclosure Prevention — Check it Out!		64

Rebuilding	■
Repairing	▲
Relocating	●
Selling	■
Undecided	■
Buying	◆
Renting	▼
Everyone	ⓔ

Time to Rebuild or Repair — Where Can I get a Loan?	65
Low Down-Payment Programs	65
Construction and Renovation Programs	68
Special Programs for Disaster Survivors	71
Are There Other Resources That Can Help Me?	74
Financial Resource Guide	76
National Resources	76
State Resources	76
Bank Regulators by State	77
Loan Product Matrix for Loan Products Offered Nationally	78
Housing and Other Providers: “Meeting the Rest of the Team”	83
“I’m Not Ready for the Road to Housing Recovery!”	84
Finding an Advocate: “I’m Ready to Go. Where Do I Start?”	87
What Are Housing Counseling Agencies and How Can They Help Me?	87
Locating a Housing Counseling Agency	87
Finding Rental Housing	88
Dealing with Property Title Issues	89
Resources for Buying and Selling	91
Professionals Who Take the Sting Out of Managing the Repair Process	94
What’s the Role of a Housing Rehabilitation Specialist?	94
Managing a Home Construction Project Yourself	96
Improving the Energy Efficiency of Your Home	98
I’m Thinking of Becoming a Landlord: What Do I Need To Know?	100
Faith-based Organizations: Accessing an Army of Helping Hands	101
Social Service Agencies	102
 Route 3. Making Informed Decisions and Steering Clear of Warning Signs 	
Accessing the “Super Highway”	107
Financial Fitness and the Road to Housing Recovery	108
Tune up with Financial Tips	108
Developing a Spending Plan	109

Rebuilding	
Repairing	
Relocating	
Selling	
Undecided	
Buying	
Renting	
Everyone	

Priorities — Which Path Will You Choose?	110
Credit — A Tool for Bridging the Financial Gap to Housing Recovery	111
Exploring Your Credit Report	112
Understanding Your Credit Report	112
Sample Credit Report (illustration)	114
More Helpful Information in Your Credit Report (illustration)	115
Brake Now and Identify Any Errors on Your Credit Report	116
Sample Dispute Letter	116
Rebuilding Your Credit Report	117
The Truth About Credit Repair	118
How Do Credit Scores Affect My Road to Housing Recovery?	119
Avoiding the Pitfalls, Potholes, and Roadblocks to Housing Recovery	120
Avoiding the Debt Detour	120
Avoid the Foreclosure Pot Hole — It’s a Big One!	120
Steer Clear of Predatory Lenders	121
Seller Beware — Not Every Offer is a Good Offer	123
Extreme Caution Required When Hiring a Contractor to Repair or Rebuild Your Home	123
It’s Not Auto Theft, But It’s Just as Dangerous	125
Caution! Bankruptcy May Not Be the Best Choice	126
Know Your Rights	127
Resource Guide for Route 3	129
Consumer, Government, and Nonprofit Resources	129
Nonprofit and Consumer Protection Organizations	131
Other Federal Agencies	135

Route 4. Resource Guide for Finding the Assistance Crew Nearest You

New Jersey Resources (NJ Residents Only)	139
---	------------

New York Resources (NY Residents Only).....	149
--	------------

Rebuilding	
Repairing	
Relocating	
Selling	
Undecided	
Buying	
Renting	
Everyone	

Mapping Your Road to Housing Recovery



As you begin your journey along the road to housing recovery, it might be helpful to start with the end in mind. However, you may not have decided what “end” might be best for you and your family. So whether you have identified a destination or are still considering your options, we’ve provided a map that identifies the pit stops you should make along the way.

The following will be covered along Route 1:

- Road Map for Rebuilding a Home
- Road Map for Repairing a Home
- Road Map for Relocating
- Road Map for Selling Your Home
- Road Map for Undecided
- Road Map for Buying a Home
- Road Map for Renting a Home



Mapping Your Road to Housing Recovery

The keys to navigating through this guide are the seven maps in Route 1. Choose the map that best reflects your housing goal. If your housing goal is unclear at this time, use the Road Map for Undecided.

Each map contains a symbol (square, triangle, rectangle, etc.) at the top. The table of contents is coded with these symbols so you can see the sections of the guide that are most relevant to the map you've selected. This will save you time in navigating to those sections of the guide that apply to your needs.

Route 1 contains the following road maps for navigating your Road to Housing Recovery.



Road Map for Rebuilding

This map is for the homeowner who needs to learn about all the assistance and resources needed to rebuild his or her house from the ground up.



Road Map for Repairing a Home

This map is for the homeowner who needs to learn about all the assistance and resources needed to repair his or her house to its pre-hurricane condition or better.



Road Map for Relocating

This map is for the property owner who wants to relocate.



Road Map for Selling Your Home

This map is for the homeowner who wants to sell property owned in a hurricane-affected area.



Road Map for Undecided

This map is for those who have not yet decided which of the maps above might be the most suited to their ultimate destination.



Road Map for Buying a Home

This map is for the renter or previous homeowner who wants to buy a home in the hurricane-affected area.

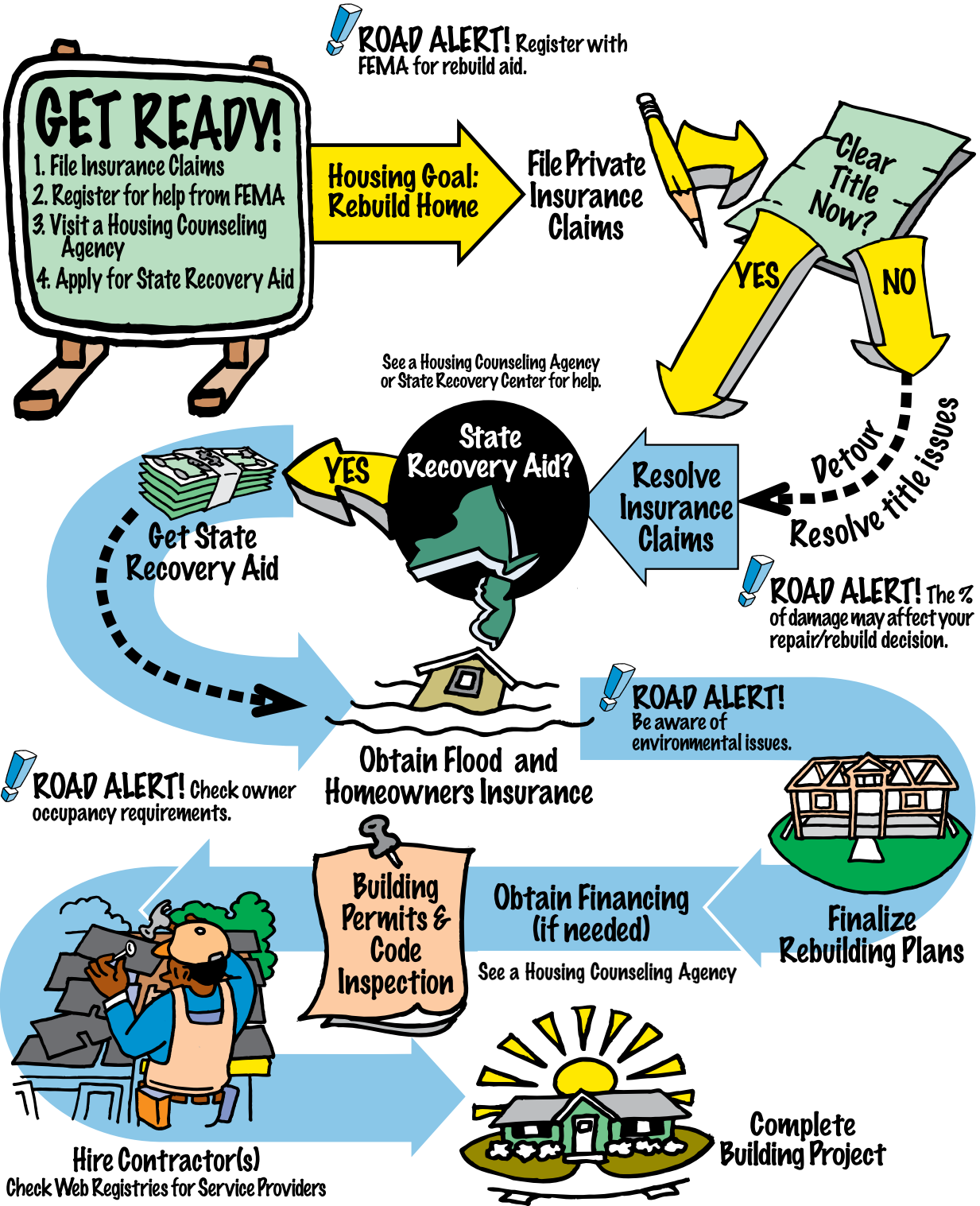


Road Map for Renting a Home

This map is for the renter or previous homeowner who is looking to rental property in the hurricane-affected area.

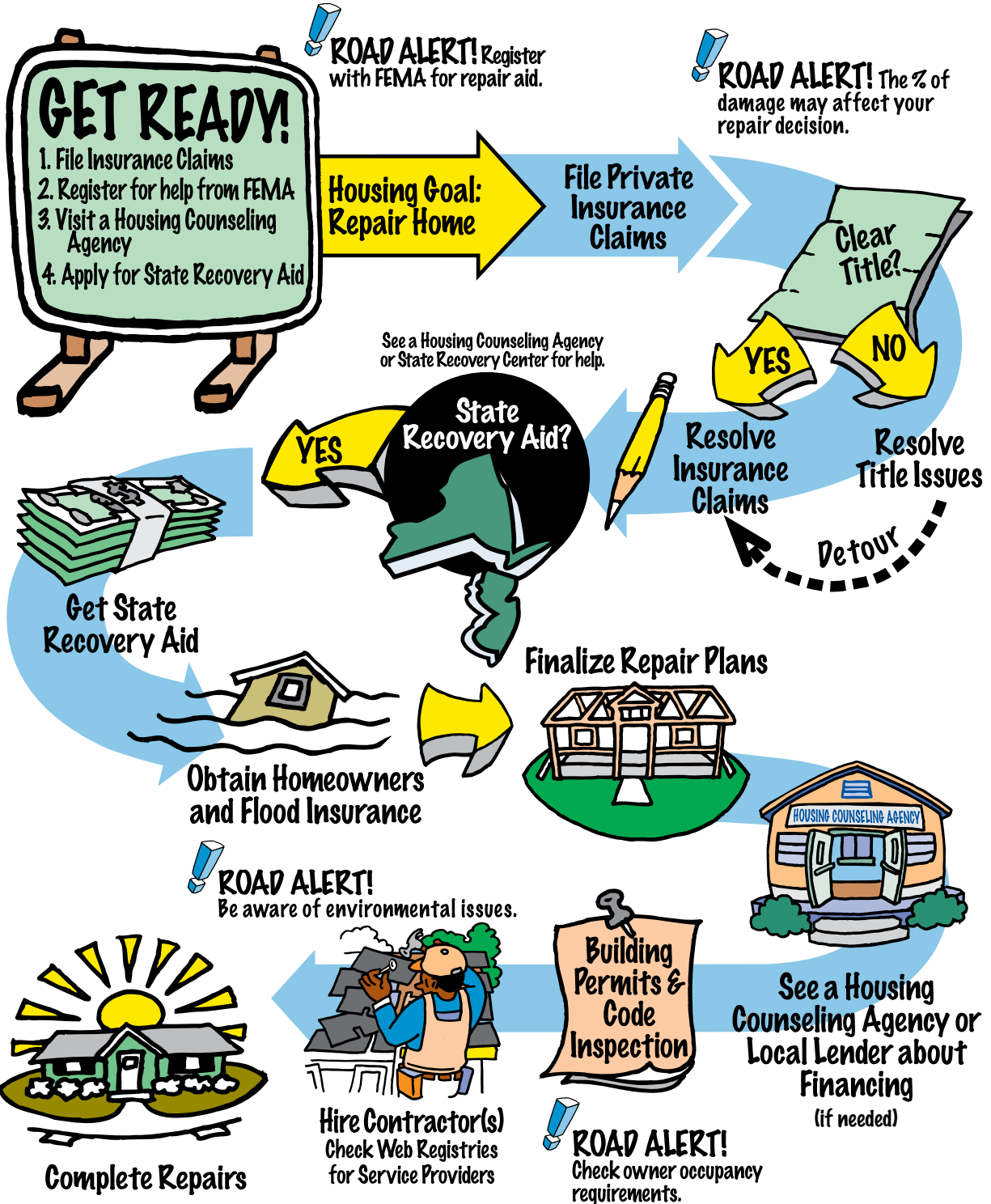


ROAD MAP FOR REBUILDING



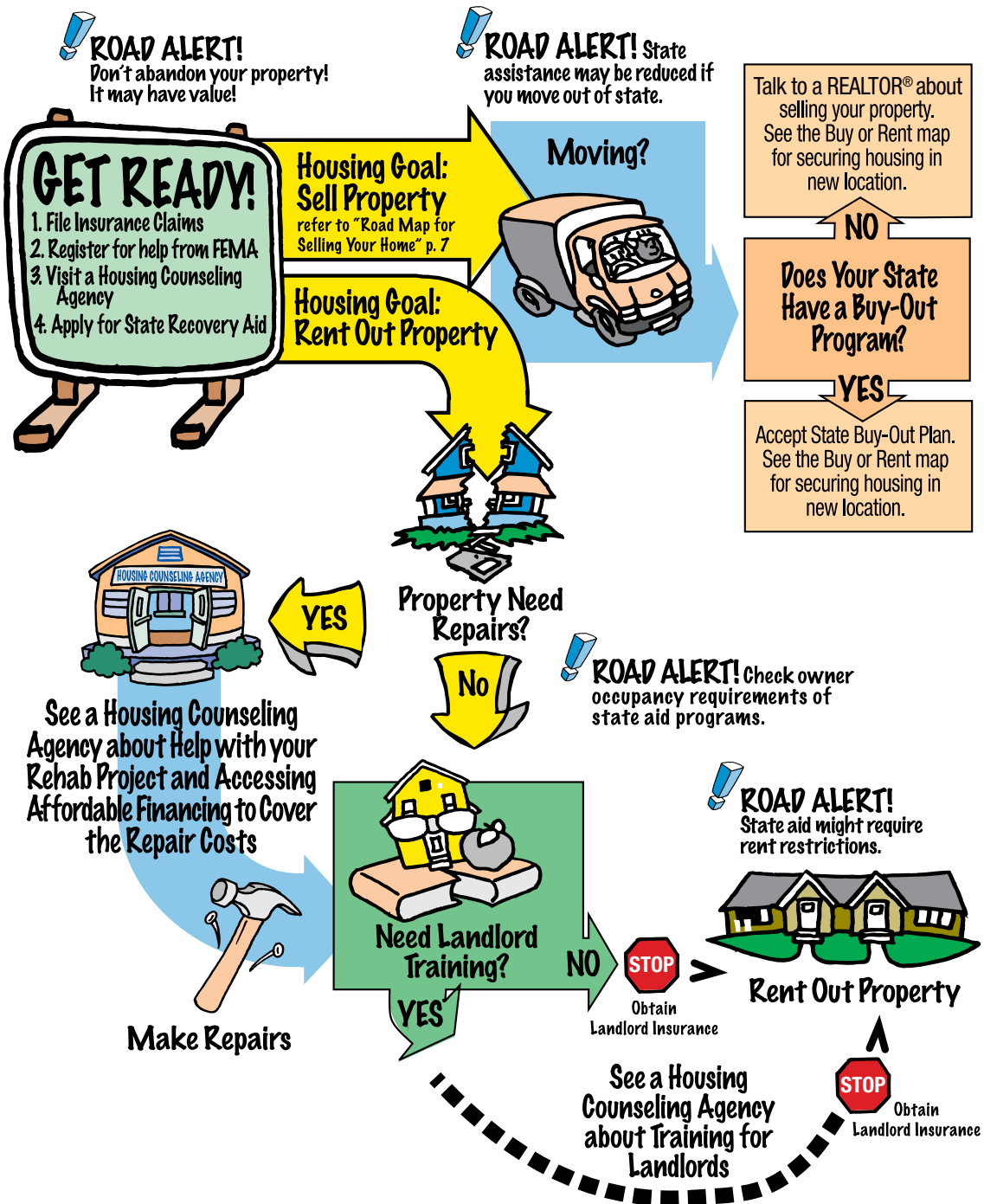


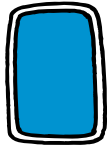
ROAD MAP FOR REPAIRING A HOME



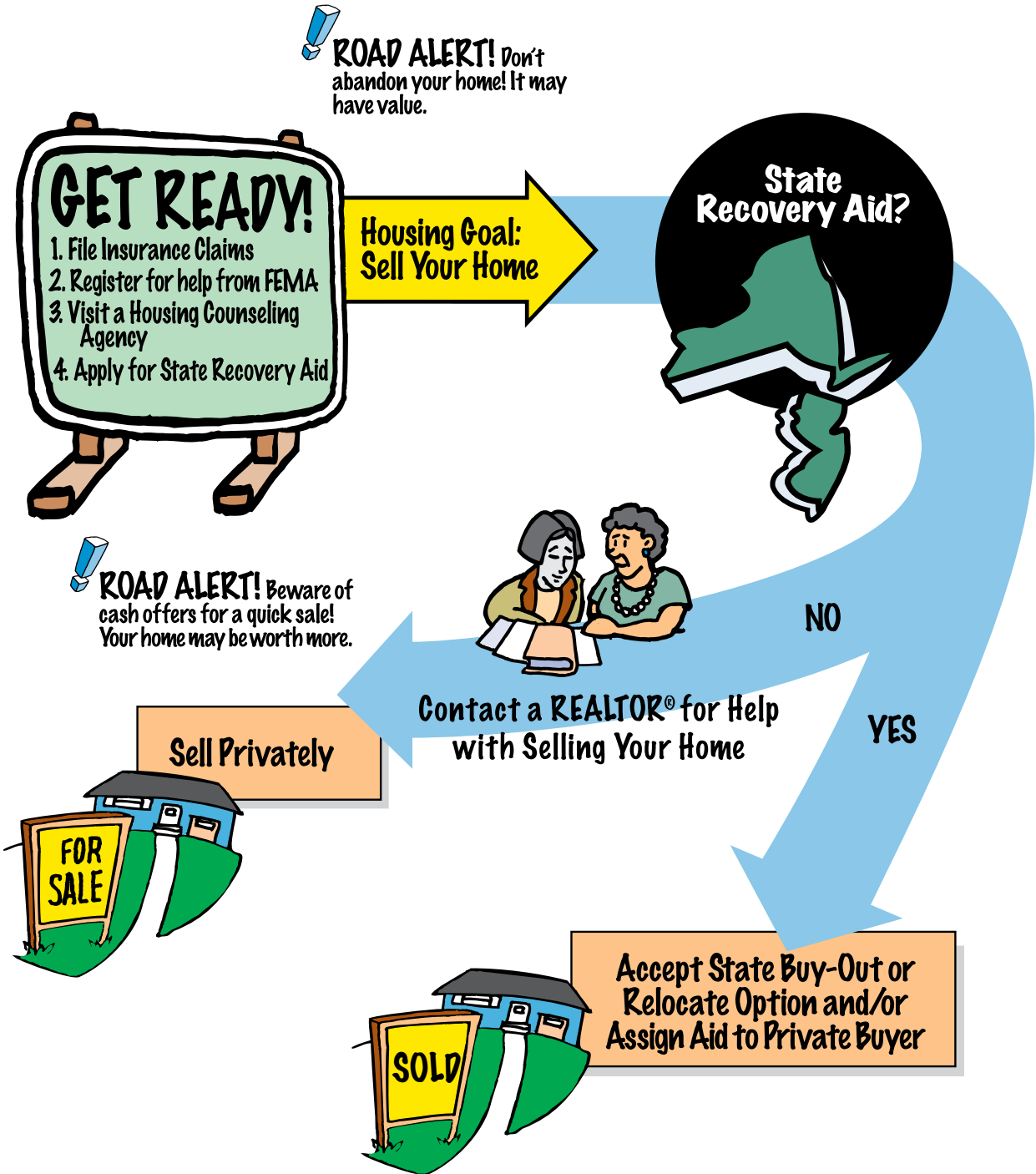
ROAD MAP FOR RELOCATING

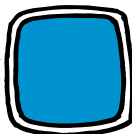
(Renters: See road map for renting)





ROAD MAP FOR SELLING YOUR HOME



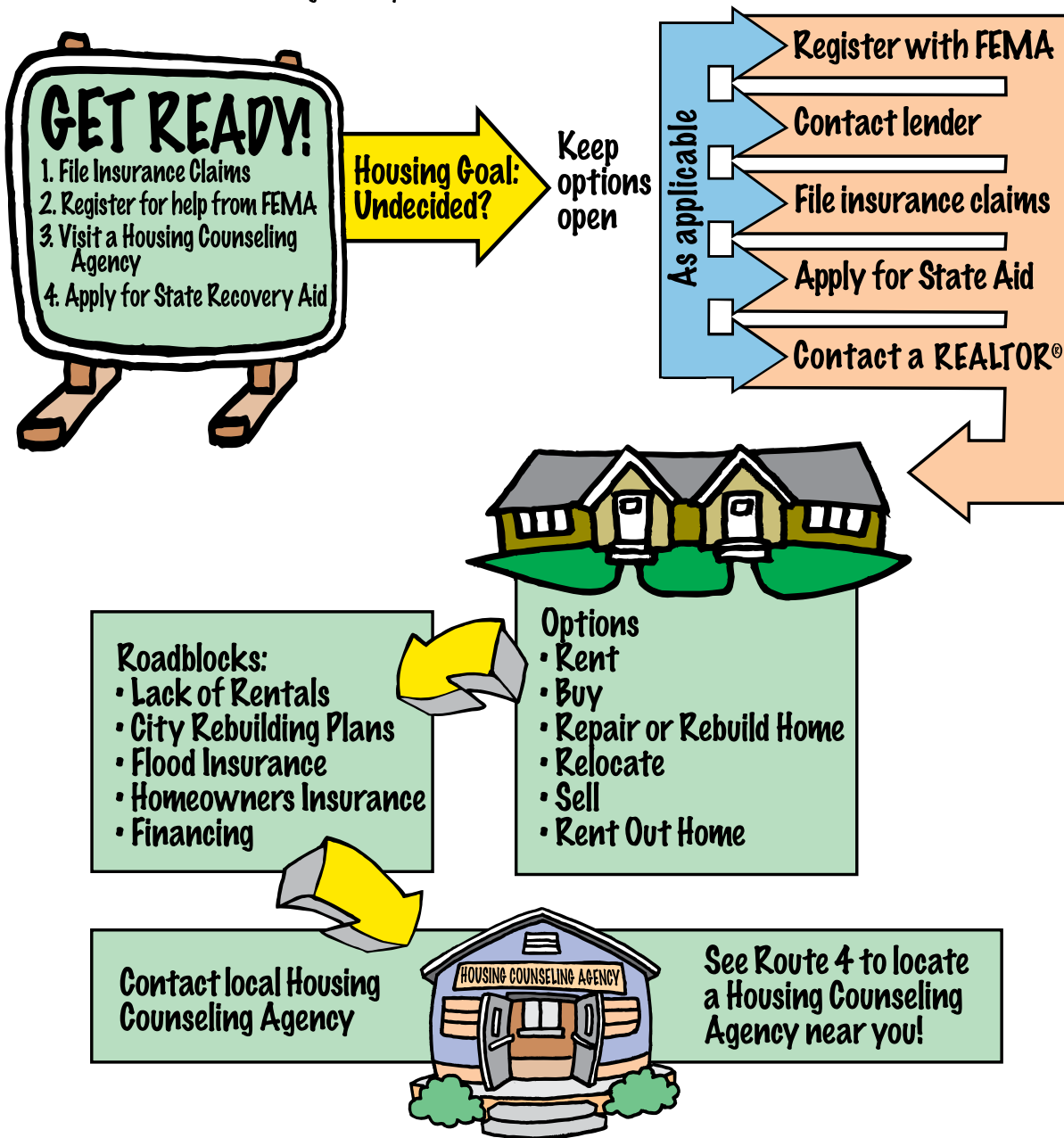


ROAD MAP FOR UNDECIDED

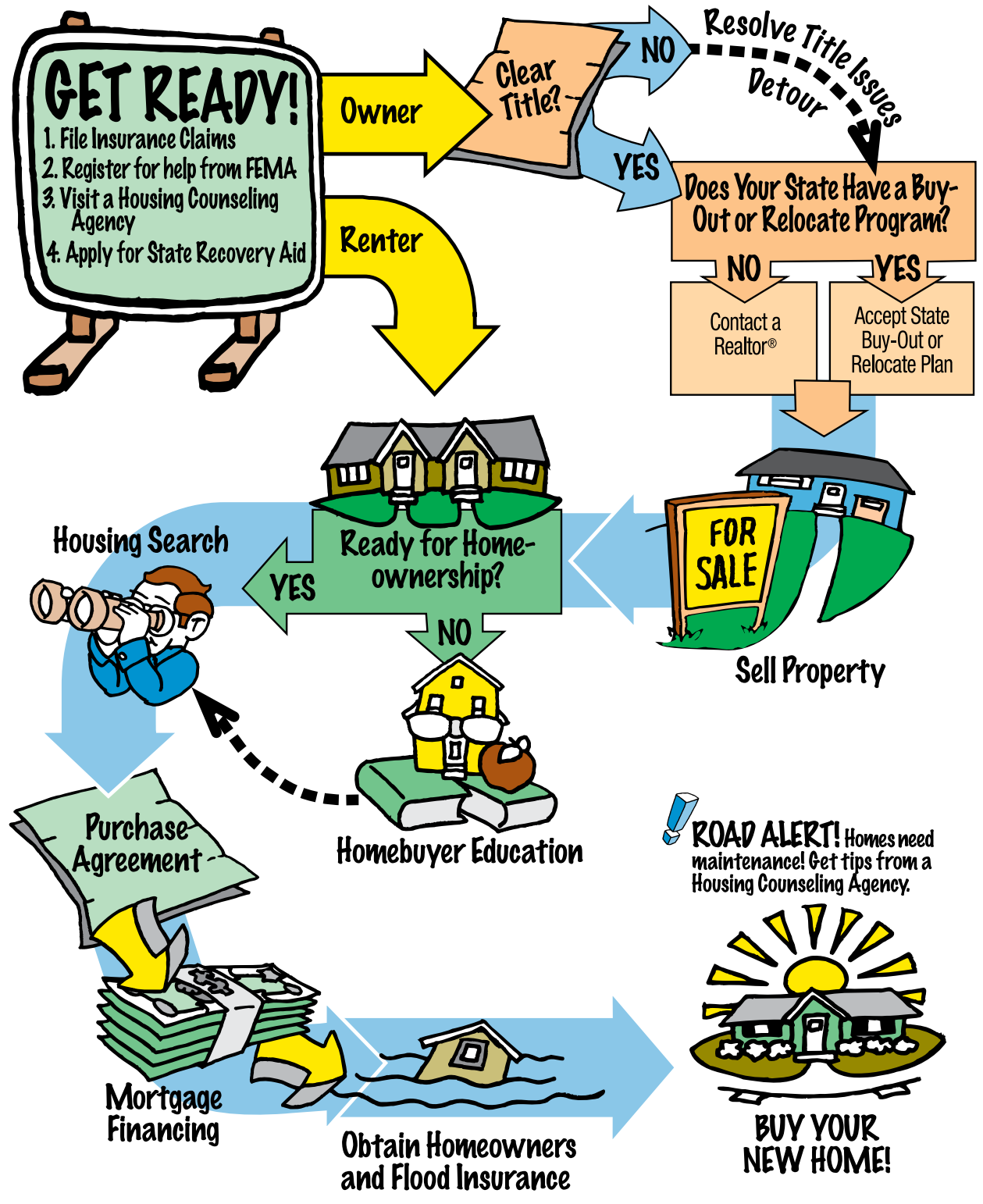
If you are still deciding which housing road to take, this map is for you.

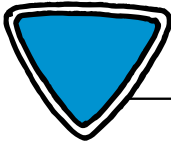
To get help in thinking about your options, visit your local Housing Counseling Agency. The first page of each State section of the Resource Guide says how to find one near you. Learn about aid programs, potential roadblocks, and how to deal with things like title problems or credit repair.

See the other road maps to learn the steps involved in different routes to housing recovery.

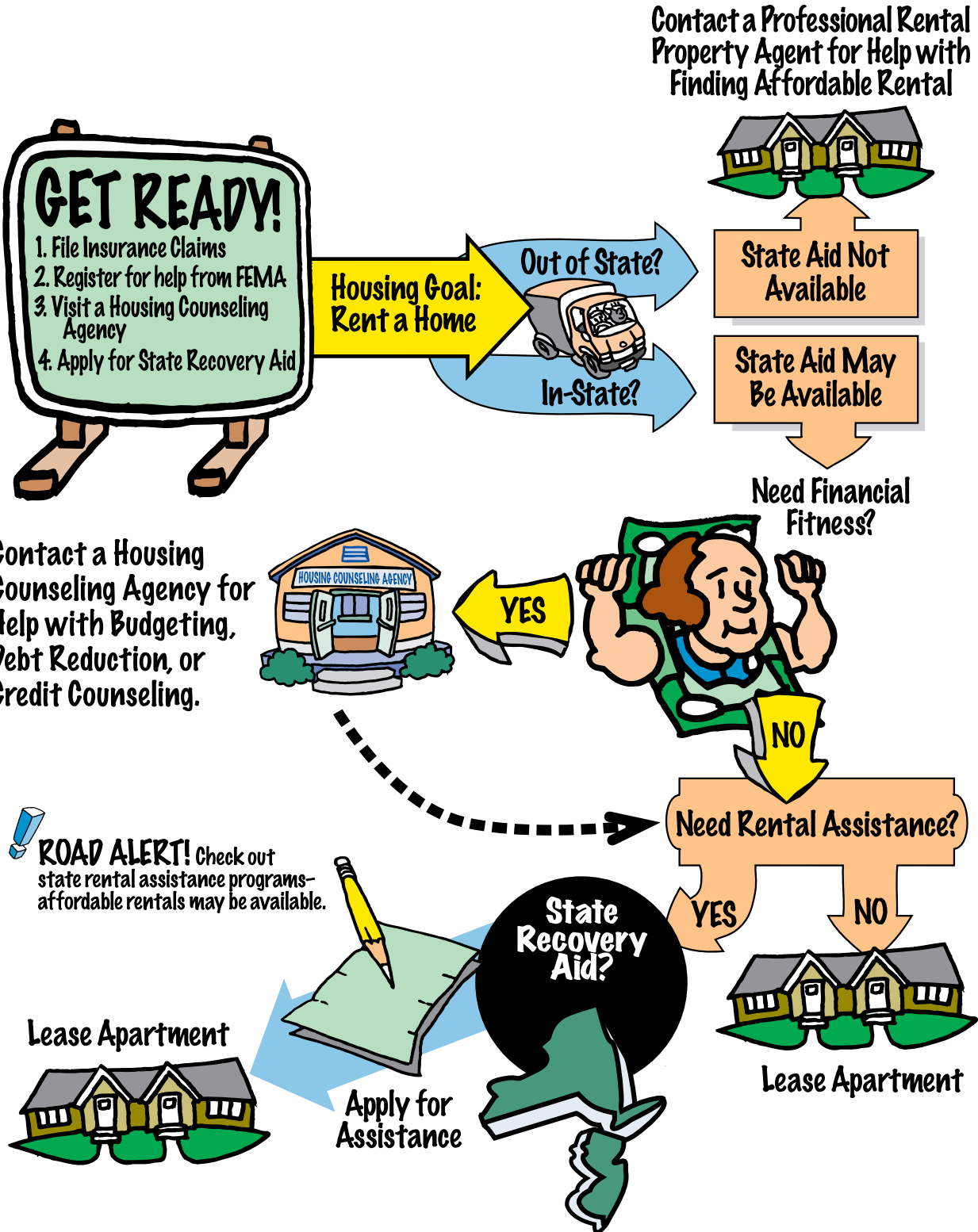


ROAD MAP FOR BUYING A HOME





ROAD MAP FOR RENTING A HOME



Introducing Your Roadside Assistance Crew



Now that you've charted your course by selecting a map, you'll need to identify your most trusted travel companions. In this section of the guide, we will identify a few of the major helpers you will meet as you make your stops along the road. Some of the names will be familiar, while others may not — but there are lots of folks out there who would like to help you get your life back to normal. So come along and get connected to your Roadside Assistance Crew!

The following will be covered along Route 2:

- FEMA: "What's in It for You?"
- State Programs: "Understanding My State's Recovery Assistance Resources"
- The Insurance Industry: "Securing the Rebuild"
- The Financial Community: "Bridging the Gap Through Financial Tools and Products"
- Housing and Other Providers: "Meeting the Rest of the Team"



Other Needs

In addition to the housing-related assistance, FEMA makes money available for necessary expenses and serious needs caused by the disaster. This includes everything on the following list:

- Disaster-related medical and dental costs
- Disaster-related funeral and burial costs
- Clothing; household items (room furnishings, appliances); tools required for your job (specialized or protective clothing and equipment); necessary educational materials (computers, school books, supplies)
- Fuels for primary heat source (heating oil, gas)
- Clean-up items (wet/dry vacuum, dehumidifier)
- Assistance with transportation, disaster-damaged vehicles
- 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

Am I Eligible for FEMA Assistance?

Before you apply for these FEMA programs, you should check to make sure that you meet the following requirements:



Eligibility for Housing Needs Assistance

The FEMA Housing Portal (<http://asd.fema.gov/inter/hportal/home.htm>) helps individuals and families who have been displaced by a disaster identify a place to live.

FEMA requires that you meet all of the following criteria in order to be eligible for Housing Needs Assistance:

- You have losses in an area that has been declared a disaster area by the President.
- You have filed for insurance benefits and the damage to your property is not covered by your insurance, or your insurance settlement is insufficient to meet your losses.
- You or someone who lives with you is a citizen of the United States, a non-citizen national, or a qualified alien.

- You have a valid Social Security number.
- The home in the disaster area is where you usually live and where you were living at the time of the disaster.
- You are not able to live in your home now; you cannot get to your home due to the disaster; or your home requires repairs because of damage from the disaster.



You **may not** be eligible for Housing Needs Assistance if:

- You have other rent-free housing that is adequate for your needs and that you can use (for example, rental property you own that is not occupied).
- Your damaged home is your secondary or vacation residence.
- Your expenses resulted only from leaving your home as a precaution, and you were able to return to your home immediately after the incident.
- You have refused assistance from your insurance provider(s).
- Your only losses are business related (including self-employment losses and farm business losses — other than the farmhouse) or items not covered by this program.
- The damaged home where you live is located in a designated flood hazard area and your community is not participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. In this case, the flood damage to your home would not be covered. *However*, you may qualify for rental assistance for items not covered by flood insurance, such as water wells, septic systems, etc. (For more details, see www.fema.gov/do-i-qualify-assistance.)

Eligibility for Assistance with Other Needs

To receive money for other needs that are the result of a disaster — but are not related to housing — **all** the following must be true:

- You have losses in an area that has been declared a disaster area by the President.
- You filed for insurance benefits, but the damage to your property is not covered by your insurance or your insurance settlement is not adequate to cover your losses.
- You or someone who lives with you is a citizen of the United States, a non-citizen national, or a qualified alien.
- You have necessary expenses or serious needs because of the disaster.
- You have accepted assistance from all other sources for which you are eligible, such as insurance proceeds or Small Business Administration disaster loans.


Alert:

Bypass to Insurance?

You may want to fast forward to the Insurance Section, p. 27 which provides detailed information about how to file an insurance claim.


Alert:

Have Insurance? Help from FEMA

If any of the scenarios to the right describe your particular situation, you can contact FEMA for additional help. You will have up to 12 months from the date you register with FEMA to submit your insurance information for review. Remember that any funds issued to you from FEMA that are eventually paid through your insurance company will have to be repaid to FEMA. According to federal law, FEMA cannot provide money to individuals or households for losses that are covered by insurance.

Disaster Assistance for Those With Insurance

There are some circumstances where you may be able to receive help from FEMA **even if you do have insurance coverage**. However, it is essential that you have already contacted your insurance agent and filed a claim. If you have not done this already, you will need to do it as soon as possible. Failing to file an insurance claim will make you unable to register for FEMA assistance.

Assuming that you have already filed a claim with your insurance company, let's look at some of the situations where FEMA may still be able to provide you with assistance:

- **Your insurance settlement is delayed.** In technical terms, "delayed" means a decision on your insurance settlement has taken longer than 30 days from the time you filed the claim. If this is what has happened to you, write a letter to FEMA at: Federal Emergency Management Agency, PO Box 10055, Hyattsville, MD 20782 or by fax, to 1-800-827-8112; explaining the circumstances. In your letter, include documentation from the insurance company proving that you filed the claim. If you filed your claim over the telephone, you should include the claim number, the date when you applied, and the estimated length of time it will take for you to receive your settlement. Remember, though, that any help awarded to you by FEMA would be considered an advance — it must be repaid to FEMA once you receive your insurance settlement.
- **Your insurance settlement is insufficient to meet your disaster-related needs.** If you have received the maximum settlement from your insurance and still have an unmet disaster-related need, write a letter to FEMA explaining that unmet disaster-related need. Include related paperwork from your insurance company for FEMA's review.
- **You have exhausted the Additional Living Expenses (ALE) provided by your insurance company.** If you have received the maximum settlement from your insurance for Additional Living Expenses (ALE) and still need help with your disaster-related temporary housing need, write a letter to FEMA explaining why you still need help. You will also need to provide documentation to prove you had and used ALE assistance from your insurance company, and include a plan for future permanent housing.
- **You are unable to locate rental resources in your area.** The FEMA Helpline has a list of rental resources in the disaster area. If no resources are available in your county, the Helpline agent will try to provide you with resources in an adjacent county. Call the Helpline at **(800) 621-FEMA (or 3362)**. For TTY service, call **(800) 462-7585**.



When you contact FEMA, you will need to have the following information:

- Five digit Zip Code
- Current contact telephone number
- Social Security number
- Current mailing address and address of damaged property
- Date the damage occurred
- Directions to the property
- Brief description of damaged property
- Insurance information and policy number(s)
- Gross family income
- A bank routing number (So FEMA can deposit funds directly to your bank account.)

Disaster Recovery Centers

FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers are accessible facilities or mobile offices where applicants can go for information about FEMA or disaster assistance. Specific services may include:

- Clarification of FEMA correspondence
- Housing assistance and rental resource information
- Status information on FEMA claims and applications
- SBA program information
- General guidance regarding disaster recovery

New Jersey and New York have numerous Disaster Recovery Centers located throughout the affected areas. Search for one near you at www.fema.gov/disaster-recovery-centers or by texting "DRC" and your zip code to 43362 or 4FEMA (standard rates apply).





Flood Insurance Requirements

When property owners receive financial assistance from the Federal Government following a disaster declaration, they may be required to purchase flood insurance coverage. Renters also need to carry flood insurance to protect against losses resulting from floods.

Flood Zones and Flood Maps

Flood zones are areas identified by FEMA for use in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). These zones indicate how likely an area is to flood. If you live in one of the areas most likely to flood — the A and V zones — you will be required to purchase flood insurance for your home. In addition, the maps provide information about your home’s “Base Flood Elevation.” This measure determines whether or not you may need to elevate your home.

The official flood zone maps can be found on the FEMA website. If you would like to speak to a local expert to examine the maps, contact your local planning, engineering, or public works department.

Reading a Flood Map

The codes on the map can tell you whether an area is likely to flood and how high a home in that area should be elevated to avoid flood damage. A and V zones are both below “Base Flood Elevation” and are likely enough to flood that flood insurance is required. The letters are followed by numbers that show just how likely the area is to flood. The higher the number following the A or V the more likely a property is to flood. (It is better to be in A1 than A30.) B, C, and X zones are considered unlikely to flood because of their elevation, drainage, or levee protection. If you live in a B, C or X zone, you are not required to carry flood insurance, but remember that while you are not required to carry flood insurance on properties located in these zones, any losses you incur that result from a flood can be covered only through the NFIP.

What the Flood Maps Mean to You

The flood zones can guide your rebuilding. They may determine whether you can rebuild, whether you can get certain kinds of assistance, and whether you will need to elevate your home. Following a disaster, FEMA may revise flood maps. Be sure to reference the most recent flood map and insurance requirements before taking steps to rebuild or repair your home. For more information, visit <http://rfcd.pima.gov/dfirm/pdfs/femafaq.pdf>.



Damaged Structures At or Above Flood Elevation:

If your home is at or above the required flood elevation based on a flood zone map or a certified elevation survey, you can immediately begin to repair or rebuild, regardless of how much damage your home received. Low-interest SBA loans are available from FEMA based on the actual cost of repairing or rebuilding a flood-damaged home and personal property, minus any insurance reimbursement.

Current loan limits are:

- **Homeowners** — Up to \$200,000 to repair or rebuild a primary residence to its condition before the disaster.
- **Homeowners and renters** — Up to \$40,000 to repair or replace personal property, such as clothing, furniture, and automobiles.

Damaged Structures Below Flood Elevation:

If your home flooded and you are not at the required flood elevation based on flood zone or a certified elevation survey, your home could fall into one of two categories:

- **Minor damage** — If the structure sustained flooding, but was not substantially damaged, repairs can be made simply by getting the necessary permits over the counter or online. You will **not** need a new elevation certificate.
- **Substantially damaged** — If the structure was substantially damaged (50% or more of the replacement value prior to the flood event), you will be required to elevate the building to the current flood elevation. This is for your own safety. If you carry flood insurance, contact your insurance carrier for information on deductibles and limits.

Do I Need to Elevate My Home?

If a flood damages your property, you may be required by law to bring your home up to community and/or state floodplain management standards. If you have NFIP insurance, and your home has been declared substantially damaged by your community, Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) coverage is provided to cover up to \$30,000 of the cost to elevate, flood proof, demolish, or relocate your property. ICC coverage is in addition to the coverage you receive to repair flood damages; however, the total payout on a policy may not exceed \$250,000 for residential buildings and \$500,000 for non-residential buildings.

For more information please visit www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-2/increased-cost-compliance-coverage.

State assistance programs may also be available; see your state’s Resource Guide in Route 4.

Building Codes: “Don’t Fight City Hall!”

Building permits are generally issued by the local Building or Planning Department. The permits are based on building codes for your area. Building codes are laws and ordinances detailing minimum safety standards that are required both for your personal safety and for others. Building codes vary from one jurisdiction to another, so you will need to check with your local office to find out the exact procedure for obtaining a building permit.

Obtaining a Building Permit:

Permit requirements are based on where your property is located and what damage was caused by the storm. In order to get a building permit to start repairing or rebuilding your home, you will probably need the following three documents:

- **Elevation Certificate** — Obtained as part of your flood insurance documents or mortgage documents. If you have not received it, you will need to check with a licensed land surveyor. This certificate will help you determine if your current slab elevation meets the Base Flood Elevation for your particular flood zone.
- **Cost of Repair Estimates** — No guessing here. The repair estimate should be obtained from a licensed general contractor, professional construction estimator, or insurance adjuster.
- **Fair Market Value** — Acceptable estimates of your home’s market value include a recent appraisal (value of land not included), a copy of your homeowners or flood insurance policy stating the value of the structure, a tax bill, or a comparative market analysis prepared by a licensed real estate broker.



Caution:

Environmental Issues

In addition to flood conditions, you also need to be aware of the environmental problem of toxic soil that may be a result of prolonged flooding. You need to consider how these problems are dealt with in the local building codes or other requirements related to rebuilding or repairing a home.

Frequently Asked Questions About Damage and Building Codes

- Q. Suppose I don’t agree with the official damage assessment of my home. What can I do?**
- A. You may dispute the assessment by visiting your local permit office to request a re-evaluation of your property. To quickly complete the assessment, bring with you: the estimated market value of your house prior to the storm, a detailed description of all damage, and photos that show the specific areas of contention.

State Programs: Understanding My State's Recovery Assistance Resources

Now that you've charted your course by selecting a map and checking in at the FEMA pit stop, it's time to find out how your state might help make your journey a successful one. Both New Jersey and New York have a broad range of comprehensive disaster recovery resources for topping your tank. There are far too many resources to list in this guide, but in this section, we will provide key New Jersey and New York "one-stop" sources for disaster recovery. In Route 4, the State Resource Guides list specific local service providers.

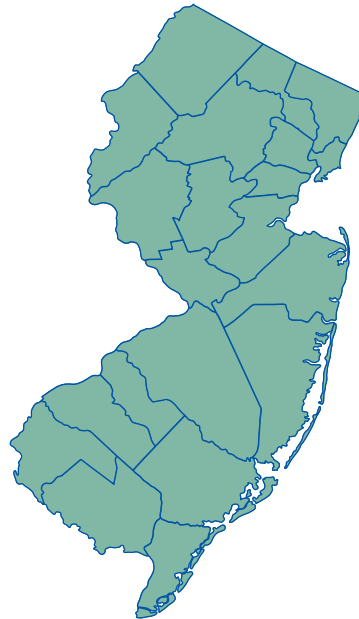
NEW JERSEY

2-1-1

The abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referral in New Jersey is 2-1-1. This easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number makes a critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities, and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. Up-to-date notifications on recovery resources and government, nonprofit, faith-based, and private providers can also be found on the Web at www.nj211.org. This website is a vital source of information for people and businesses needing assistance in New Jersey. In addition, the NJ 2-1-1 website provides a comprehensive guide to federal, state and local disaster recovery resources.

New Jersey Counties Eligible for FEMA Individual Assistance

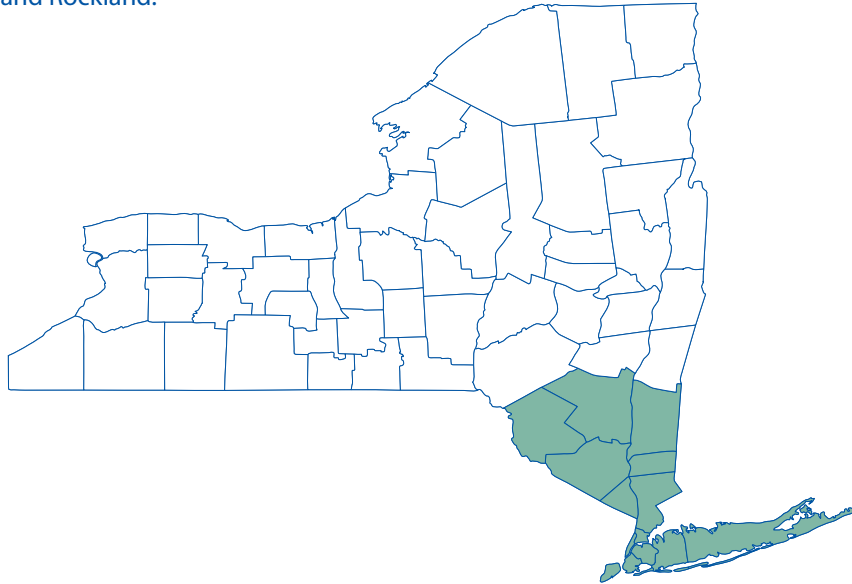
All 21 counties in New Jersey are eligible for Individual Assistance.





New York Counties Eligible for FEMA Individual Assistance

The following counties were declared eligible through FEMA for Individual Assistance: Kings, Nassau, Ulster, Sullivan, Queens, New York, Richmond, Suffolk, Westchester, Orange, Putnam, Bronx and Rockland.



New York Emergency Management

The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services provides FEMA and state Hurricane Sandy Hotline Contacts and numbers at www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/event/sandy/contact.cfm. Make this one of your first stops for current information on how New York is responding to the damage left by Hurricane Sandy.

NYC.gov/ NYC Restore

For New York City residents, www.NYC.gov provides detailed information on recovery programs and services including clean-up, emergency housing/shelter, housing repair, health and environmental concerns, and social services. NYC Restore, is a comprehensive effort to connect residents and businesses impacted by Hurricane Sandy with financial, health, environmental, nutritional and residential services, as well as FEMA reimbursement processing. The initiative consists of seven NYC Restoration Centers located in the communities that were hit the hardest, to provide long-term assistance to New Yorkers. More information and Restoration Center locations can be found at www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/2012/dasc.html.

Pit Stop Ahead!

You'll fill up on information about Insurance at the next pit stop, so slow down as you make the turn!



Confused by the Fine Print? The Nuts & Bolts of Insurance

Let's begin with some basic information about how insurance policies work. Then you will have a better idea of what to look for when you review your current policy or begin to shop for new insurance. (Insurance has a language all its own; you may find it helpful to see the "Definitions of Insurance Terms" later in this section on page 59.)

Types of Insurance

Although there are many types of insurance available, our main focus in this section is on homeowner, renter, and flood insurance programs, including coverage for owners of condominiums and manufactured housing. We'll also touch briefly on related policies such as automobile, boat and watercraft coverage, home rental and dwelling insurance, law and ordinance coverage, and supplemental insurance you might want to consider.

Homeowners Insurance

Homeowners insurance protects your home and its contents from accidents and disasters. It is known as a "package policy" because it usually provides two or more types of protection. For instance, it covers physical damage to your home and also protects you from liability or legal responsibility for damage or injuries that you or your family members and pets may cause to others.

Most homeowners policies also cover some living expenses you would incur if you are unable to occupy the property for a period of time. Your policy probably also includes some limited medical-payments coverage.

Let's examine the most common types of coverage that are included in your policy:

- Home and Property Damage
- Personal Liability
- Additional Living Expenses
- Medical Payments

Home and Property Damage

This portion of your insurance pays to replace or rebuild your home and any other structures on your property — such as a detached garage. It also provides the funds to replace your personal property — such as furniture and clothing.



Caution:

Understanding Types of Insurance

It's important that you understand the purpose of each of these types of insurance products — and the events that are covered or excluded with each.

**Alert:****Flood Insurance
by the Numbers**

You should be aware that there are NFIP limits on coverage. Standard dwelling coverage is limited to a maximum of \$250,000 for homes and \$500,000 for businesses. Annual premiums can vary from \$350 to \$2,100, depending on the amount of coverage you need and the Flood Zone your home is in.

The amount of money that flood insurance pays out for personal property is based on actual cash value rather than the cost to replace your damaged or lost property. This can severely impact you if you must replace everything.

Automobile Insurance

Automobile insurance is required by law in all states. Each state sets the minimum types and amounts of coverage that you must have. Mandatory policies usually include:

- **Personal Injury Protection** — Covers auto accident related injuries for you and your family members or others riding in the car. Some policies will also insure your child if he or she suffers an injury while riding a school bus under this type of coverage.
- **Property Damage Liability** — Covers certain damage that you or anyone covered cause to another person's property with an automobile whether moving or parked. It only covers damage for which you or anyone insured under your policy is legally liable.
- **Bodily Injury Liability** — This coverage pays for death or serious and permanent injury to others when you are legally liable for an accident involving your automobile or while driving someone else's car (in some cases). Your insurance company will pay for injuries up to the limits of your policy and provide legal representation if you get sued.
- **Collision** — This coverage pays, regardless of who causes the accident, for repair or replacement of your vehicle if it collides with another vehicle, flips over, or crashes into an object. It does not cover injuries to people or damage to property other than your covered automobile.
- **Comprehensive** — This coverage pays for losses from incidents other than a collision, such as fire, theft, windstorm, vandalism, or flood. It also covers damages caused by falling objects or from hitting an animal.
- **Uninsured and/or Underinsured Motorist** — This coverage pays for bodily injuries to you, your family members, and any other person occupying your covered automobile, should they be caused by the negligence of an uninsured or underinsured motorist.



Supplemental Insurance

Review the following wise tips to consumers on supplemental types of insurance coverage:

- ***Inflation Guard*** — Inflation or room additions can increase the replacement cost of your home and its contents, while the actual cash value of your home may decrease over time. An inflation guard endorsement gradually increases your coverage limit annually to keep your insurance coverage up-to-date with current prices and inflation.
- ***Windstorm Coverage*** — Most homeowner policies do cover damage caused by windstorms, hurricanes and hail, but insurance companies may exclude this coverage in some high-risk areas — such as homes on or near the beach.
- ***Hurricane Deductibles*** — Most coastal insurance policies include special hurricane deductibles that take effect when the National Weather Service has issued a hurricane warning. These deductibles depend on the value of the insured property and apply only to hurricane claims. You may owe extra out-of-pocket costs for damage that occurs: any time a hurricane watch or warning is issued, up to 72 hours after such a watch or warning ends, and any time when hurricane conditions exist throughout the state.

Even though you may face damage from more than one storm during a season, you typically only have to make one deductible payment per year.

Sources of Insurance

You have at least three sources of insurance products if you're a resident of a coastal or flood-prone area.

Private-Sector Firms

These include the familiar, name-brand insurance companies and mutual associations that are found across the country. Many offer both homeowners and automobile coverage. You'll want to read the fine print and discuss your options with an insurance company representative to make sure your needs are met.

You also want to be sure that your insurance company is dependable and law-abiding. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) monitors insurance companies by tracking a wide variety of information in its "Consumer Information Source." Information the NAIC tracks includes key annual statements, a financial profile, basic data about where policies are written, as well as assets and liabilities. The financial strength of your carrier is very important. This is especially true if the company has many commitments that could force it to make large payouts. The NAIC also tracks complaints through its Closed Consumer Complaint data for each company that provides reports to NAIC.





Understanding Disaster-Specific Damage

Before you can begin to file a claim, you need a clear understanding of which policy covers what types of damages. For example, coastal-area homeowners policies often contain the following specific limits: “excludes flood, surface water, waves, tidal water, and overflow of a body of water or spray from any of these.”

You can see from this confusing language that it is often difficult to quickly resolve who is responsible for damages, since it’s not always easy to separate perils like wind-related damage (covered) from flood-related damage (not covered).

The insurance adjuster will make the final determination on which insurance policy is responsible, once he or she reviews the claim. However, you need to know beforehand what is covered in each of your policies. That way you can be sure to have the right protection in place for each type of damage.

For the purposes of this section of the guide, we’ll limit our discussion to five types of hurricane-and flood-related damages:

- Water
- Wind
- Flood
- Mold
- Soil

Water Damage

Water damage is one of the most common reasons people make claims on their homeowners insurance. Burst pipes, leaky appliances, and flooded basements are just a few of the unexpected ways you could discover exactly what is and is not covered by your homeowners insurance policy.

Homeowners policies don’t cover flood damage, but they do cover other kinds of water damage. For example, they would generally pay for damage from rain coming through a hole in the roof or a broken window, as long as the hole was caused by a hurricane or other disaster covered by the policy.

Wind Damage

Wind-related damage, including wind-damage from hurricanes, is typically included in your homeowners insurance policy unless you live in coastal areas. In those cases, if you are unable to find private-sector coverage you can usually get insurance from one of the state-run alternative programs. Check out the previous section on insurance for availability and state contact information. Even if your policy includes windstorm damage, you may be able to purchase additional protection if the policy limits are not enough.





Soil Damage

Prolonged, severe flooding can create new challenges in terms of environmental hazards such as dangerous levels of minerals or other toxic substances — such as pesticides and industrial waste. Environmental testing may be required, unsafe levels of toxic substances (ex: arsenic) could be found in the soil at or above exposure thresholds.

Damage to Your Home During a Storm: What Insurance Covers What Damage?

Hurricanes cause a wide variety of damage to homes. One or more of the scenarios below may apply to your situation. These are general scenarios that assume you only have homeowners insurance. Since insurance coverage varies by state and insurance company, be sure to contact your insurance company regarding your specific situation.

Scenario No. 1: During a heavy rainstorm, water leaks through your roof. The roof is damaged, and so is your furniture.

Are you covered? Somewhat. While you might not be reimbursed for roof repairs, because that's a home-maintenance issue, the water damage to your home is covered. The damage to your furniture is not covered, because rainwater leakage is not one of the "named perils" for which the contents of your house are covered.

Scenario No. 2: My house did not flood, but I have water damage from a storm or hurricane.

Are you covered? Rain entering through wind-damaged windows, doors or a hole in a wall or the roof, resulting in standing water or puddles, is considered windstorm — rather than flood — damage, and is covered by your homeowners policy. The NFIP flood insurance policy only covers damage caused by the general condition of flooding typically caused by storm surge, wave wash, tidal waves, or the overflow of any body of water over normally dry land areas. Buildings that sustain this type of damage usually have a watermark, showing how high the water rose before it subsided.

Scenario No. 3: A nearby lake or river overflows its banks, causing a flash flood in your living room.

Are you covered? No. Flood damage is not covered by homeowners insurance. You must purchase flood insurance from the federal government. You can purchase flood insurance, as long as your community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.





Sample Homeowners Policy

PROTECTORS FIRE & CASUALTY CO.
THIS IS NOT A BILL **POLICY NUMBER** **3**
 10-91-8880-4
 HOMEOWNERS RENEWAL DECLARATIONS POLICY

1 NAMED INSURED AND MAILING ADDRESS:
SMITH, JOE AND JANE
 123 OAK STREET
 HOMETOWN, FL 12345-6789

POLICY PERIOD:
 1201 A.M. STANDARD
 TIME AT THE INSURED RESIDENCE
FROM: 6/1/12 TO: 6/1/13

THE RESIDENCE COVERED BY THIS POLICY IS LOCATED AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

2 PROTECTORS FIRE & CASUALTY COMPANY
 P.O. BOX 12345
 BOSTON MA 01234

RENEWAL CERTIFICATE
 PREPARED MAR 11 2005

DATE DUE 6/1/12	PLEASE PAY THIS AMOUNT \$479.53	4
IF YOU HAVE MOVED, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR AGENT		

FULL PAYMENT BY DATE DUE
 EXTENDS POLICY PERIOD TO JUNE 1, 2013

POLICY NUMBER
 10-91-8880-4

MORTGAGEE: TRUST BANK
 P.O. BOX 000
 TALLAHASSEE FL
 34567-8910

5

9 FORMS, OPTIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS:
 SPECIAL FORM 3 FP-7923
 JEWELRY AND FURS \$2,500/\$5,000 OPT JF
 SILVERWARE THEFT \$5,000 OPT SILG
 HOME COMPUTER \$10,000 OPT HC
 REPLACEMENT COSTS/CONTENTS OPT RC

10

11 FLORIDA-SPECIFIC ENDORSEMENTS
 SINKHOLE FL 7210.4
 ORDINANCE/LAW FE 7310.4

SURCHARGES (REQUIRED BY FLORIDA LAW):
 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES \$2.00
 FLORIDA HURRICANE CATASTROPHE FUND \$4.53

6 COVERAGES/LIMITS
 SECTION I
 A DWELLING \$100,000
 OTHER STRUCTURES \$10,000
 B PERSONAL PROPERTY \$50,000
 C LOSS OF USE ACTUAL LOSS
 SUSTAINED

DEDUCTIBLES-SECTION I
 COVERED LOSS \$500 7a

HURRICANE: SPECIAL 2% DEDUCTIBLE
 THIS POLICY CONTAINS A SEPARATE
 DEDUCTIBLE FOR HURRICANE LOSSES,
 WHICH MAY RESULT IN HIGH OUT-OF-
 POCKET EXPENSES TO YOU.

7b

SECTION II
 L PERSONAL LIABILITY \$100,000
 DAMAGE TO PROPERTY
 OF OTHERS \$500 8
 M MEDICAL PAYMENTS \$1,000
 TO OTHERS (EACH PERSON)

* SPECIAL DISCOUNTS:
 SMOKE DETECTORS
 DEAD-BOLT LOCKS
 FIRE EXTINGUISHERS
 BURGLAR ALARM
 APPROVED STORM SHUTTERS

* TOTAL DISCOUNTS:
 20% OR \$176 PER
 YEAR

12 Thanks for letting us serve you...
 Agent: BROWN, BONNIE
 Telephone: 904-555-1234

1. Policyholder name and location of insured dwelling
2. Company Name
3. Policy Number
4. Premium
5. Mortgage holder name and address
6. Summary of basic coverage and limits
- 7a. Deductible (amount policyholder must pay per claim or accident)
- 7b. Hurricane deductible
8. Liability protection
9. Type of policy (in this case, HO-3)
10. Optional coverage (called an endorsement) for special terms such as jewelry or silverware
11. Coverage offered or required under state law
12. Name of agent or company representative

Preparing and Submitting Your Insurance Claim

Start with a Home Inventory



The claims process really begins long before a disaster strikes, starting with an inventory of your possessions. Chances are you have gathered many items over the years that are important to you. Losing those items in a fire or flood could be devastating — especially if you have no documents or records to support an insurance claim for their value.

Your inventory should have a detailed list of items in your home, including a description of each item, and make and model numbers if applicable. Include the serial number for major appliances and electronics. The list should include where and when the item was purchased.

There are widely available computer programs and Internet resources to help you easily prepare and manage your home inventory. Once you have completed an up-to-date list you can quickly and easily add new items as you acquire them.

It is best to itemize jewelry and other valuables. Clothing items can be summarized, such as “20 pants, 40 shirts.” However, track any articles of clothing that are particularly valuable, such as a designer suit.

Attach relevant sales receipts, bills of sale or other supporting documents to the list and keep it in a safe spot — a bank safety deposit box or a safe in your home. Take a picture of or videotape the item if appropriate. This will help provide additional proof as to its condition if you must file a claim. Your insurance company is likely to have an inventory form available.

Homeowners Insurance Claim Processing Tips

It’s important to follow some basic steps in order to help maintain a smooth claim filing process. The following steps will help you deal with the disaster and prepare for the initial claim filing process:

- **Gather Your Documents** — Gather your insurance policy and related insurance records. If the policy was lost or destroyed in the disaster, contact your insurance agent or company to get a copy.
- **Know Your Policy** — Understand what your policy says. The policy is a contract between you and your insurance company. Know what is covered, what is excluded, and what the deductibles are.
- **Report Property Damage** — Immediately report property damage to your agent and insurance company. Your agent should provide claim forms if required and report your loss to the insurance company. The company will arrange for an insurance adjuster to visit your property and assess the damage.



- **Ask Questions** — Ask the company for the specific language in the policy that is in question. Find out if the disagreement is because you and the insurance company interpret your policy differently.
- **Don't Rush into a Settlement** — If the first offer made by an insurance company does not meet your expectations, be prepared to negotiate to get a fair settlement. If you have any questions regarding the fairness of your settlement, seek advice from a professional.

Personal Property Insurance Claim Processing Tips

- Add up the cost of everything inside your home that has been damaged in the disaster. Review your home inventory to help you remember the things you may have lost.
- If you don't have an inventory, look for photographs or videotapes that picture the damaged areas. For expensive items, you may also contact your bank or credit card company for proof of purchase.
- When making your list, don't forget items that may be damaged in out-of-the-way places—such as the attic or tops of closets.

Additional Tips for the Claims Process

FEMA also provides a set of guidelines for filing flood insurance claims at its website, at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/preparation_recovery/file_your_claim.jsp.

When Things Go Right: Settling Damage Claims and Moving Ahead with Repairs

Disasters can make enormous demands on insurance company personnel. Sometimes after a major disaster, state officials request insurance adjusters to see everyone who has filed a claim before a certain date. When there are a huge number of claims, the deadline may force some adjusters to make a rough first estimate. Don't hesitate to ask the adjuster for an itemized explanation of the settlement offer if you need it.

If the first evaluation is not complete, set up an appointment for a second visit. The first check you get from your insurance company is often an advance. If you're offered an on-the-spot settlement, you can accept the check right away. Later on, if you find other damage, you can "reopen" the claim and file for an additional amount.



Alert:

More Ahead on Disputing An Insurance Settlement

See "Have a Complaint or Can't Get an Answer? When Things Go Wrong" just ahead, on page 49, for how to dispute your insurance company's proposed settlement with you.

How Is the House Insurance Settlement Amount Determined?

The settlement amount, or compensation, you get depends on which type of policy you have. Here are some things you should know.

Replacement-Cost and Actual Cash Value Policies

A replacement-cost policy provides you with the dollar amount needed to replace a damaged item with one of similar kind and quality without deducting for depreciation — the decrease in value due to age, obsolescence, wear and tear, and other factors.

An actual cash value policy pays you the amount needed to replace the item minus depreciation.

Suppose, for example, a tree fell through the roof onto your eight-year-old washing machine. If you had a replacement-cost policy for the contents of your home, the insurance company would pay to replace the old machine with a new one. If you had an actual cash value policy, the company would pay only a percentage of the cost of a new washing machine because a machine that has been used for eight years would be worth less than its original cost.

Suppose, also, that the tree damaged your 15-year-old roof so badly that it had to be completely replaced. If you had a replacement-cost policy, the insurance company would pay the full cost of installing a new roof. If you had an actual cash value policy, it would pay a smaller percentage of the cost of replacing it.

Extended and Guaranteed Replacement-Cost Policies

If your home is damaged beyond repair, a typical homeowners policy will pay to replace it up to the limits of the policy.

When the value of your insurance policy has kept up with increases in local building costs, a similar dwelling can generally be rebuilt for an amount that is within the policy limits.

Some insurance companies offer a replacement-cost policy that will pay a certain percentage over the limit to rebuild your home — 20 percent or more, depending on the insurer — so that if building costs go up unexpectedly, you will have extra funds to cover the bill. These are called extended replacement-cost policies.

A few insurance companies still offer a guaranteed replacement-cost policy that pays whatever it costs to rebuild your home as it was before the disaster. But neither a guaranteed nor an extended replacement-cost policy will pay for a house that's better than the one that was destroyed.





How Much Time and Money Is This Going to Cost?

Mediation can continue as long as both parties agree that they are making progress. Most mediation procedures only last a few hours. Mediation is paid for by the insurance company, except in the case where the consumer cancels without good cause and wants to reschedule the mediation. In that case, the consumer pays.



- **Local fire protection** — How close is the nearest fire hydrant and the local fire station? How fast emergency responders can arrive can be the difference between a little damage and total destruction. Rural properties present greater risk since fire and rescue teams may be located many miles away.
- **Discounts** — You can sometimes get a multiple policy discount from insurers that cover your home, car and perhaps other insurance needs.
- **Credit history** — More insurance companies are looking at credit reports as part of the application process. Many are now including credit score or credit history items in their consideration process and pricing premiums, or refusing to offer coverage, based on credit record findings.



Caution:

**You May Get
What You Pay For**

Remember, price should not be the only determining factor. While you don't want to overpay for insurance, a company that cuts premium prices too much to attract new business may not have the capacity to perform when you really need it.

Strategies for Minimizing Risk and Reducing Premiums

You may have no control over market conditions that contribute to premiums, however there are other items you do have some control over that can affect premium amounts. You may be able to save anywhere from 5% to 25% or more in annual insurance costs just by implementing some of these simple tips:

Shop Around

Like most professional services, it pays to shop and compare providers. You must first determine the types of coverage and policy endorsements you need. Then call insurance company agents and brokers or check the Internet for comparison quotes. Prices can vary greatly, so be sure to get several comparisons.

Your state regulator can provide you with a complete list of licensed insurers in your state and may also have comparison pricing information. State regulator contacts are listed in this section on page 53.

Check the background of insurance companies you are unfamiliar with. They should be financially stable and have high marks from independent ratings agencies. Regulators often have information concerning complaints or rulings against certain providers which will help you steer clear of unethical business practices or insurance.

Increase Your Deductible Amount

The insurance deductible is the amount you will pay towards replacing your losses if you have a claim. For example, if you have a claim of \$25,000 worth of personal property losses with a \$2,000 deductible, your settlement check would be \$23,000. Also keep in mind that claims that are less than the deductible amount are your responsibility. For example if the deductible is \$2,000 and your losses are \$1,500, you will not be eligible to receive any reimbursement under your policy. Most experts recommend a minimum \$500 deductible. If you can afford to raise the deductible to \$1,000, you could create significant savings in annual premium costs.


Alert:

Reducing the Cost of Mobile or Manufactured Home Insurance

As a mobile or manufactured home owner, there are things you may be able to do to keep the costs down, such as insulating and winterizing, securing the home to the ground with approved tie-downs and ground anchors, and installing security devices. The cost of mobile home insurance also depends on the age and type of mobile home you own. Doublewide and multiple-segment homes usually cost less to insure.

Review Your Primary and Supplemental Coverage

As mentioned earlier, you should periodically review your insurance coverage to make sure it is keeping up with inflation and replacement costs. Also review things like supplemental endorsements and policies for items that are no longer worth their insured value or have been sold, donated, etc.

Seek Out Group or Other Discounts

Ask about specific discounts or special offers that may apply to you or your home. These might include such things as senior discounts for those over age 55 or special incentives for modernizing home electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling systems.

Also check with your auto, life, or long-term care insurer to see if any savings are available to you.

Choosing Homeowners Insurance for Mobile or Manufactured Homes

Homeowners that live in manufactured or mobile homes have often had to pay more for insurance coverage than other homeowners for the same amount of coverage. This is because mobile homes are at a higher risk of damage from wind. You should be prepared to shop around to find a policy that best suits your needs.

Major Pit Stop Ahead!

You've just rounded the bend and the road is wide open — so you can pick up speed. However, just ahead there is a gap in the road, and you'll need to make a pit stop at the financial section — just in case you need a loan to bridge the gap. There are a number of loan product options ahead that may come in handy farther down the road to housing recovery. So, let the top down as you breeze along the Road to Housing Recovery.



Insurance Resource Guide

Hazard: Anything that increases the chance of an accident occurring.

Homeowners Insurance: Protects homeowners from losses to their homes, personal property, and some types of damage or injury to others for which the homeowner is liable. Homeowners insurance is subject to the terms, limits, and conditions of the policy contract.

Independent Adjuster: An individual who estimates losses on behalf of an insurance company, but is not an employee of that company.

Inspection: Verification of a vehicle's physical condition.

Insurance Score: Used in the underwriting process in some states. An individual's insurance score is frequently based, in part, on a person's credit history.

Insured: A person or organization covered by an insurance policy.

Insurer: An organization that provides insurance.

Liability: Any legally enforceable obligation or responsibility for the injury or damage suffered by another person.

Limit: The maximum amount of protection purchased by the insured for a specific coverage.

Loss: Any measurable dollar cost of damage and/or injury suffered by a person.

Loss of Use: Compensation to a third-party claimant for financial consequences resulting from the inability to use property as the result of accident-related damage.

Peril: A danger or hazard that can cause a loss, for example, a car collision with an object, or a fire.

Personal Property: Property that is not land or connected to land (real estate), such as furniture or jewelry.

Policy: A contract between you and the insurance company.

Premium: The price of the insurance policy that the insured pays in exchange for insurance coverage.

Property Damage Liability Coverage: Pays for damage to someone else's property resulting from an accident for which you are at fault and provides you with a legal defense. This coverage is subject to the terms, limits, and conditions of your policy contract.

Umbrella Insurance: Provides high limits of additional liability coverage above the limits of your homeowners and auto policy. In addition, it provides coverage that may be excluded by other liability policies.



The Financial Community: Bridging the Gap Through Financial Tools and Products

Your next stop on the road to housing recovery may include contacting your mortgage lender. The mortgage lender holds a lien on your home as security for your loan and must be notified in the event of any damage or losses to the property. In addition, you may be behind on your housing payments, or need to obtain a loan to buy or repair a home. Even people who qualify for assistance or who had insurance coverage when the hurricane hit may still need a loan to cover the financial gaps between the amount of available funds and the costs to repair or rebuild.

In this section of the guide we'll look at some of the mortgage programs that lenders, federal agencies, and individual states have put in place to help you face the financial challenges of housing recovery. We'll review available resources for homeowners with existing mortgages, and we'll outline both standard and special loan programs that can help you buy, repair or rebuild your home.

When you're ready for more detailed information and assistance, be sure to make a pit stop and check out the additional resources that are provided at the end of this section.

"Help — I Can't Pay My Mortgage!"

Disasters often force us to make extremely difficult choices. Whether you like it or not, in times of crisis you may have to choose between paying for the necessities of life and maintaining timely payments to those whom you owe money. These difficult decisions can drive you to fall behind on bills, mortgages, car and credit card payments, and other debts.

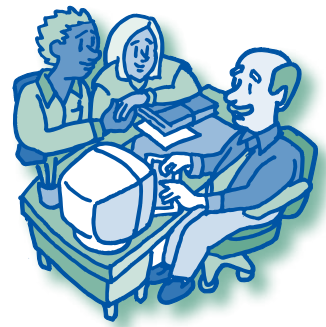
Some people are unable to pay their mortgages right after the disaster but can catch up within a few months as their lives gradually return to normal. Others have reserves or sources of cash that help them maintain their obligations for a few months until savings and other funds run out.

While many lenders are patient and understanding in the aftermath of disasters, most expect customers to re-establish timely payments or stick with payment plans within a reasonable amount of time.

Don't Delay; Talk with Your Lender

It is important for you to work with your lender if you are behind on your mortgage — this can reduce the possibility of foreclosure and eviction. The unfortunate truth is that most borrowers either avoid contact with their lenders altogether or wait until it's too late to save their homes.

No matter what the circumstance, whether disaster or other life situations, it's best to call your lender right away if you are having difficulty making your loan payments. Lenders have a number of ways they may be able to help. However, you need to talk to your lender early in the process, while there are still many options your lender can offer.





The financial community wants to support borrowers in the hurricane recovery process.

When calling or talking with a mortgage lender, be sure to tell the customer service representative all of the details of your situation. If you need help, ask for it. If you are asked to do something, but are unable to do so, tell the customer service representative about your limitations. Mortgage lenders want to be helpful, but they need to know your circumstances in order to offer you the best options and help avoid foreclosure proceedings. The truth of the matter is that it costs a lot for everyone involved when a foreclosure occurs. Foreclosure is not a good solution for borrowers, communities, or mortgage lenders. In addition to speaking with your lender, you may also contact a housing or foreclosure prevention counselor for advice and guidance.

Next we discuss some of the ways to get through a problem with paying your mortgage, including:

- The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions
- Loan modifications, forbearance, workouts, and other foreclosure prevention options
- HUD's Mortgage Payment Assistance Program and its National Servicing Center
- Where to find a loan and the types of mortgage financing that are available



The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions

The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions was created by NeighborWorks® America and other partners to respond to rising national foreclosure rates. The increase in foreclosures hurts both the families involved and their neighborhoods.

NeighborWorks® America has joined forces with the Homeownership Preservation Foundation to promote a toll-free hotline — **888-995-HOPE (4673)** — that offers free foreclosure prevention services and counseling to consumers. Also available is the Hope Loanport, a web-based tool designed to more efficiently assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure. Through this service, counselors can transmit applications directly to mortgage companies. Hope Loanport details are available at www.hopeloanportal.org.

The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions recommends the following to borrowers who may be at risk of losing their homes:



- ***If you know you’ll miss even one payment, notify the lender.***
 Calling when you are late by one or two payments is better than calling when you are three or four months late. There will likely be several options to help you over the bumps in the road as long as you contact the lender early in the game. Sometimes pride can get in the way of practicality. There is no shame in needing some extra help when faced with uncontrollable life circumstances.
- ***Stay on top of home repairs and maintenance.***
 NeighborWorks® organizations provide workshops and counseling about repairs and maintenance of a home. They may also have home rehabilitation specialists on staff who help families who want to rehab their homes. These rehabilitation specialists can make sure you get the best work for your money, and may even be able to serve as a project manager for a major repair or improvement. Many NeighborWorks® organizations also have affordable loan products designed to cover the costs of repairs. Too often, homeowners are pushed into foreclosure by emergency repairs that stretch their budget to the breaking point, or by unethical contractors who strip the homeowners’ equity by overcharging for services and leaving them with debt they cannot handle.
- ***Work it out.***
 Depending on the situation, the lender may lower the interest rate, lower the monthly payment, or enter into a repayment agreement for missed payments. Be sure to consider contacting a local housing or foreclosure prevention counselor if you need assistance dealing with your mortgage lender. Sometimes housing counselors can advocate on your behalf to negotiate reasonable repayment options with your servicer in an effort to avoid foreclosure. You may also want to consider refinancing your existing mortgage, since your local housing counseling agency may have access to more affordable loan products.



Work with Your Lender or Loan Servicer to Prevent Foreclosure

Remember, foreclosure is avoidable. The following options may be available, especially if you begin working with your lender early in the process of your financial difficulties:

- **Forbearance** — You are allowed to delay payments for a short period, with the understanding that another option will be used afterwards to bring your mortgage up-to-date.
- **Reinstatement** — This is when you are behind in your payments, but you can promise a lump sum to bring your mortgage up-to-date by a specific date.
- **A repayment plan** — If your account is past due, but you can now make payments, the lender may agree to let you catch up by adding a portion of the past-due amount to each monthly payment until your account is current.
- **Modifying your mortgage** — You and your lender can renegotiate your mortgage to extend the term (length) of your loan or take other steps to reduce your payments. One potential solution is to add the past due amount into your existing loan, and finance it over a longer term.
- **Selling your home** — If catching up on payments is not possible, the lender might agree to put foreclosure on hold to give you some time to try to sell your home.
- **Property give-back/Deed in Lieu of Foreclosure** — You may request that the lender allow you to give back your property — and then forgive the debt. While give-backs do hurt your credit rating, they don't hurt as much as a foreclosure. The lender might require that you attempt to sell the house for a specific time period before agreeing to this option, and it might not be possible if there are other liens (mortgages or other debts) against the home.

HUD Foreclosure Prevention — Check It Out!

There are a number of programs administered through the U.S. Treasury Department and HUD to assist homeowners who are at risk of foreclosure and otherwise struggling with their monthly mortgage payments. A summary of these various programs can be found on HUD's website http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/avoiding_foreclosure. On this site, you can explore options such as loan modification and refinancing, find links to HUD foreclosure prevention counselors, and other useful information. Distressed homeowners are encouraged to contact their lenders and loan servicers directly to inquire about foreclosure prevention options that are available. If you are experiencing difficulty communicating with your mortgage lender or loan servicer about your need for mortgage relief, you can also find information about and links to organizations that can help contact lenders and servicers on your behalf at the webpage listed above.



For FHA loans, HUD’s National Servicing Center (NSC) works with lenders to find ways to avoid foreclosure on borrowers’ mortgages. Information and frequently asked questions (FAQ’s) for both lenders and borrowers regarding FHA loan servicing and preventing foreclosure are available at www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/nsc/nschome.cfm or by calling **877-622-8525**. Search for HUD-approved foreclosure prevention counselors at www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/fc/.

HUD Relief for certain FHA, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Mortgages

If your loan is owned by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, you may be eligible for a loan modification or forbearance. Also, for those homes located within the Federally Declared Disaster (FDD) zone, HUD has instituted a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) insured mortgages.

Time to Rebuild or Repair — Where Can I Get a Loan?

Once you’ve settled your insurance claim, you’re ready to begin the process of repairing or rebuilding your home. Is your home completely destroyed or does your neighborhood still remain uninhabitable? If so, you may need a loan to cover the financial gaps — or you may be interested in buying or building in another area.

It is impossible to give a list of available loan products within the pages of this guide. This section provides the name and a brief description of widely available national and state products that might make sense for disaster survivors. For ease in locating products that might best suit your needs, we’ve grouped them into four broad categories:

- Low Down Payment Programs
- Construction and Renovation Programs
- Special Programs for Disaster Survivors
- Consumer Loans for Disaster Survivors

We’ll briefly outline the features and benefits of standard and custom national products. In addition, New Jersey and New York are responding to Hurricane Sandy by adding special benefits for disaster survivors in their first-time homebuyer and affordable mortgage programs, so keep checking your local resources to see what might be available to you.

Low Down Payment Programs

Low down payment programs come with many options and features that make them even more attractive for borrowers with limited funds. Some of these loans will allow you to purchase a home with less than a \$500 down payment or even no down payment at all!

Alert:



Brake Hard Here!

If the lists of loan program features and descriptions contain terms that you don’t understand, don’t worry — help is available. You can contact a housing counselor or attend a homebuyer education workshop to learn about the mortgage terms. This will help you be in the “driver’s seat” when it comes to “walking the walk” and “talking the talk.” Access to a whole network of housing counselors is right at your fingertips — it’s located along Route 4 in the New Jersey and New York Resource Guides.

Alert:



Loan Products

You’ll definitely want to check out the Loan Product Matrix located at the back of this section to get a sense of the types of loan programs that may be available to you.

A variety of low down payment conventional loan programs is available, and FHA has always been a good source for affordable loan programs. Some of these programs even have special relaxed guidelines for targeted borrowers, such as police, fire, and hospital workers.

Fannie Mae's My Community MortgageSM Product Suite

The My Community Mortgages (MCM) help lenders serve America's increasingly diverse population of low- and moderate-income borrowers. This menu of products is offered with several options and with flexible terms. A few of the key features of these products include:

- Minimum down payment of 0 to 5% , depending on the borrower and the number of units in the property. For a single unit property the minimum down payment is zero dollars from the borrower with a maximum 97% LTV, 3% can come from another acceptable source. For a 2-4 unit property the maximum LTV 95%, the borrower must contribute 3% the remaining 2% can come from another acceptable source.
- Financing up to 100% of the value of the property
- Flexibility related to credit history; nontraditional credit history accepted
- Special options for teachers, police officers, firefighters, and health-care workers
- Special options for the disabled

Freddie Mac Home PossibleSM Mortgage Product Suite

Freddie Mac's Home PossibleSM Mortgage is designed for first-time homebuyers, and minority, new immigrant and low- to moderate-income borrowers. It provides you with a low down payment and flexible credit terms to make it easier for you to qualify. A few of the key features of these products include:

- Minimum down payment of 5%
- Available in fixed-rate and adjustable-rate mortgages
- Flexibility related to credit history
- Second mortgages allowed under certain circumstances.



Alert:

Don't Forget to Tap into Your State Housing Finance Agency

You should also check with your state Housing Finance Agency to see if local programs to help disaster survivors have been introduced. Locate your state's housing finance agency at the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) website, www.ncsha.org.

Construction and Renovation Programs

If your home needs extensive repairs or has to be completely rebuilt, you'll want to examine these construction, renovation and home improvement loans. Some allow you to purchase or refinance your existing mortgage and build the cost of repairs into the loan.

In this section we'll review the following products:

- Fannie Mae HomeStyle® Renovation Mortgage
- Freddie Mac Renovation Mortgages
- FHA 203(k) Rehabilitation Mortgage
- HUD Title 1 Program
- RHS Homeownership Direct Loan Program (Section 502)
- RHS Mutual Self-Help Housing Loans (Section 502)
- RHS Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program (Section 502)
- RHS Very Low Income Housing Repair Program

Fannie Mae HomeStyle® Renovation Mortgage

The HomeStyle® Renovation Mortgage allows the borrower to combine home purchase or refinance with the cost of renovating or repairing the home — in one loan and with one closing. Instead of financing the renovation with a second mortgage or home equity loan, you get the lower interest rate of a first mortgage and only have to pay for one mortgage closing. You can also borrow an amount based on the value of the home after the renovations are finished, so you know you will have the funds available to do the job right.

Other costs related to a renovation may be added to the loan amount. For example, you can even finance the rent on another home or apartment to live in while the renovations take place. For home purchases, the loan amount can be based on the costs of the renovation project or on the "as-completed" value of the home after the renovations are finished. That means you can borrow more than the home's current value, knowing its value will increase after the improvements are finished.



Freddie Mac's Renovation Mortgages

This product helps serve borrowers who need cash to repair, restore, rehabilitate or renovate existing homes, or to make improvements to a home they are buying. Freddie Mac's Renovation mortgages offer a single mortgage with one set of closing costs to cover both purchase and rehabilitation, and allow up to six months of principal, interest, taxes and insurance covered by financing if the home is temporarily uninhabitable. A wide variety of rehabilitation for homes is covered.

FHA 203(k) Rehabilitation Mortgage

The FHA 203(k) Rehabilitation Mortgages can finance the purchase and rehabilitation of a home being purchased. This reduces costs for the borrower because only one closing is required. It also has several attractive advantages. HUD has recently released a "streamlined" version of this product that is less restrictive, so be sure to check it out as well. Key features include:

- Options for 15-year and 30-year fixed-rate mortgages
- Can be used to finance one- to four-unit owner-occupied primary residences
- One mortgage covers both purchase and rehabilitation
- Also available for those who want to refinance an existing mortgage and rehab or make improvements to the property

HUD's Title 1 Program

The Title 1 program is for light or moderate rehabilitation of properties, as well as the construction of nonresidential buildings on the property. This program may be used to insure such loans for up to 20 years on either single-family or multifamily properties. The maximum loan amount is \$25,000 for improving a single-family home or for improving or building a nonresidential structure.

Only lenders approved specifically for this program by HUD can make loans covered by Title 1 insurance. While most lenders and contractors use this program responsibly, HUD urges consumers to use caution in choosing and supervising contractors conducting Title 1 repair or renovation work.



RHS (Rural Housing Services) Homeownership Direct Loan Program (Section 502)

Section 502 loans are used to help low-income households purchase homes. They can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate homes, or to purchase and prepare sites — including providing water and sewage facilities.

The Housing Assistance Council, a nonprofit corporation devoted to rural affordable housing, is a great resource for rural housing and loan program information. It offers the following guidance on Rural Housing Services loan programs at its website, www.ruralhome.org.

- Loan terms can be up to 38 years.
- The loan can be used to purchase or rehabilitate a manufactured home.
- There is no down payment requirement.

Contact your Rural Development State Office to find out the location of the local office closest to you, or visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/hsf_sfh.html. **You may also call 202-690-1533 or TTY, 800-877-8339.**

RHS Mutual Self-Help Housing Loans (Section 502)

The Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan program (a variation on the regular Section 502 Homeownership program) is for families who are unable to buy decent, safe, and sanitary housing through conventional methods. Families in this program — a mutual self-help project — do a substantial amount (approximately 65%) of the construction labor on each other's homes, under supervision. The savings from the reduced labor costs allow these families to own their homes. If families cannot meet their mortgage payments during the construction phase, the payments can be included in the loan.

RHS Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program (Section 502)

The Section 502 Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program serves rural residents who have steady, low, or modest income, and yet they can't get adequate housing through conventional financing.

These loans enable low-income and moderate-income rural residents to acquire modestly priced housing by buying a new or existing house, or buying a new manufactured home.

In this variation of the Section 502 program, RHS does not make a loan directly to an eligible borrower, but guarantees a loan made by a commercial lender. This guarantee substantially reduces the risk for lenders, thus encouraging them to make loans to rural residents who have only modest incomes and little collateral.



Interested borrowers should contact their local Rural Development office for more information on the program and a list of approved lenders. The loan application itself is made with the approved lender, and is subject to their schedule for loan approval.

RHS Rural Repair and Rehabilitation Loan and Grant Program (Section 504)

The Very Low-Income Housing Repair program provides loans and grants to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards. Key features of this program include:

- Loans of up to \$20,000
- Loan terms up to 20 years at 1 percent interest
- Grants of up to \$7,500
- Grants are only available to homeowners who are 62 years old or older

Special Programs for Disaster Survivors

HUD and other federal and state agencies have introduced some special programs for disaster survivors. Other investors like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have also relaxed some requirements on their standard loan programs for survivors of disasters. See page 73 for more information.

In this section we'll outline some of these types of loans. Be sure to check with your local lender or state housing finance agency to see what you might be eligible for. We'll examine the following programs and products along this section of the road to housing recovery:

- FHA 203(h) Disaster Loan Program
- FEMA Home Repair Assistance Program
- SBA Home Disaster Loan

FHA 203(h) Disaster Loan Program

The Section 203(h) program is offered through lenders to survivors of a major disaster who have lost their homes and are in the process of rebuilding or buying another home.

Through this program, the federal government helps survivors in special disaster areas designated by the president. The program makes it easier for disaster survivors to get mortgages and become homeowners or to re-establish themselves as homeowners.

People are eligible for this program if their homes are located in an area that was designated by the President as a disaster area and if their homes were destroyed or damaged to such an extent that reconstruction or replacement is necessary. These loans may be used to finance the purchase or reconstruction of a one-family home that will be the principal residence of the homeowner. The new home can be located anywhere in the country. Key features include:

- **No down payment is required** — The borrower is eligible for 100% financing.
- **Some fees are limited** — FHA rules impose limits on some of the fees that lenders may charge in making a mortgage.

This product is available only through FHA-approved lending institutions, such as banks, mortgage companies, and savings and loan associations.

More details on this program are at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/housing/sfh/ins/203h-dft. To locate a participating lender, go to that Web page, scroll down to the last paragraph, and click on the link for “contact a HUD- approved lender.” You can also call toll-free at **800-569-4287**.

FEMA Home Repair Assistance Program

Through its Home Repair Assistance program, FEMA provides grants to homeowners whose primary residences require only a little repair in order to make them livable or accessible. The repairs must be able to be completed within 30 days of the start of work, cannot exceed a maximum repair amount set by FEMA, and must be necessary as a result of damage from the hurricane.

If you apply for Home Repair Assistance, FEMA will inspect your home and base the amount of its grant on the reasonable cost of repair to the damaged property. Repairs covered by Home Repair Assistance may include:

- Plumbing, electrical systems, heating systems, air conditioning
- Septic systems and water wells
- Windows, doors, roof, and floor
- Outside walls, roofs, home foundations
- Repairs necessary to provide access to a residence
- Repairs necessary to eliminate health and safety hazards

If you own a mobile home and it is your primary residence, Home Repair Assistance does cover repair costs related to blocking, leveling and anchoring the mobile home.



For further information about your mortgage, contact the National Servicing Center at 877-622-8525. For other questions, contact the FHA Resource Center at 800-CALL-FHA (800-225-5342) or email: answers@hud.gov.

Check to see if Fannie Mae owns your loan at: www.KnowYourOptions.com/loanlookup. Additional assistance? Call 1-800-7FANNIE (1-800-732-6643), or go to: www.KnowYourOptions.com/relief.

Check to see if Freddie Mac owns your loan at: www.freddiemac.com/mymortgage. Additional assistance? Call 1-800-FREDDIE (1-800-373-3343) and select option #2, or go to: www.freddiemac.com and click on the Hurricane Sandy Relief link.

Stop to See Lots of Program Details in Financial Resource Guide

Check out the Loan Product Matrix at the end of this section for more information on specific affordable, disaster recovery loan programs.

Are There Other Resources That Can Help Me?

Many individuals affected by Hurricane Sandy need grants or other types of financial assistance to complete the purchase or renovation of their homes. Remember, new programs and modified terms are being introduced all the time. Be sure to check with your local housing counseling agency, your state housing finance agency or a trusted local lender about assistance programs that are currently available in your market. Some programs may be available only temporarily or immediately after a disaster.

Special Tax Considerations

While it is well beyond the scope of this publication to offer specific tax advice, you should be aware of general tax changes for those affected by the hurricanes. Visit www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Help-for-Victims-of-Hurricane-Sandy for information on tax relief and guidance.

Claim the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits

Many individuals and families affected by Hurricane Sandy have experienced a major decline in income, with jobs wiped out along with homes or earnings dramatically reduced. If you worked during the year but your income is below a certain amount, you can claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) when you file your taxes. The EITC is a tax credit for eligible working families that provides tax refunds of up to \$5,891 for tax year 2012. You may also be eligible to claim the Child Tax Credit of \$1,000 for each child in your family.





Financial Resource Guide

National Resources

Fannie Mae

3900 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: 800-7FANNIE or 800-732-6643
Website: www.fanniemae.com

Freddie Mac

Headquarters I (PHO I)
8200 Jones Branch Drive
McLean, VA 22102-3110
Telephone: 703-903-2000
Website: www.freddiemac.com

HUD

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410
Telephone: 202-708-1112
TTY: 202-708-1455
Website: www.hud.gov

State Resources

New Jersey

New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Agency

637 South Clinton Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08611
Consumer Hotline: 800-NJ HOUSE (800-654-6873)
Website: www.njhousing.gov

New Jersey Housing Resource Center

Telephone: 877-428-8844
Website: www.njhrc.gov

New York

New York State Homes and Community Renewal (Albany)

Hampton Plaza
38-40 State Street
Albany, New York 12207

New York State Homes and Community Renewal (New York City)

25 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004

Toll-free: 866-ASK-DHCR (866-275-3427)
Website: www.nyshcr.org



Loan Product Matrix for Loan Products Offered Nationally

Product Name	My Community Mortgage	HomeStyle Renovation with Community Lending Features	HomeStyle Construction to Permanent
Lender or Sponsor Name	Fannie Mae	Fannie Mae	Fannie Mae
Eligible Property Types?	Owner-occupied, one-unit primary residence, including condos, co-ops and PUD's; no manufactured housing. Owner-occupied 2-4 unit (no 2-4 unit condos, co-ops, or manufactured housing).	Limited to 1 and 2 unit property unless otherwise approved.	1 and 2 units; no manufactured housing; approved condos.
Renovations or Repairs Allowed?	With Community Home Choice (for persons with disabilities) and Energy Efficient options.	Yes (combines home purchase or refinance with home improvement financing in one loan with one closing).	New construction (finances the purchase of lot or land, construction of a new home, and a permanent mortgage at one time in single loan).
New Construction?	Yes	No	Yes
Loan Types?	Purchase or limited cash out refinance.	Purchase or limited cash out refinance.	Purchase or refinance.
Loan Term?	Up to 40 years (40-year term as of 8/06).	15 to 30 years	15 to 30 years
Borrower or Household Income Restrictions?	100% of AMI with exceptions for certain areas.	No	No
Geographic Restrictions?	None	None	None
Down Payment or Minimum Investment?	Zero to 5%, depending on the borrower and number of units	Minimum 5%, eligible for 3/2 option.	5% to 20%, depending on number of units, investor properties and DU findings.
Other Program Features or General Information	Pre-purchase counseling required for some buyers	Nonprofits are not eligible to use any community lending features.	N/A
To Find Out More	Check with participating lender.	Check with participating lender.	Check with participating lender.

Loan Product Matrix for Loan Products Offered Nationally (continued)

Product Name	FHA Streamlined 203(k)	Title 1
Lender or Sponsor Name	HUD	HUD
Eligible Property Types?	1 to 4 units. Can also be used to convert or add to the number of units. Limited commercial space is also allowed with exceptions. Condos are limited to 4 units per building.	1 to 4 units.
Renovations or Repairs Allowed?	Allows homebuyers to finance up to an additional \$35,000 into their mortgage to improve or upgrade their home before move-in.	Designed for small repair or home improvement loans up to \$25,000 for a single-family home.
New Construction?	No. Property must be at least 1 year old.	No. Property must be at least 1 year old.
Loan Types?	Purchase or refinance with renovation. Can also be used for relocation of home.	Home improvement loan.
Loan Term?	15 or 30 years	Up to 20 years
Borrower or Household Income Restrictions?	None	None
Geographic Restrictions?	None	None
Down Payment or Minimum Investment?	Minimum 3.5%, but can be a gift.	Not applicable.
Other Program Features or General Information	N/A	—
To Find Out More	Check with participating lender.	Check with participating lender.

Loan Product Matrix for Loan Products Offered Nationally (continued)

Product Name	Homeownership Direct Loan Program (Section 502)	Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program (Section 502)	Very Low Income Housing Repair Program (Section 504)
Lender or Sponsor Name	Rural Development	Rural Development	Rural Development
Eligible Property Types?	Single-family, condominiums, mutual self-help housing and FHA-approved manufactured housing.	Single-family, condominiums and FHA-approved manufactured housing.	Single-family, condominiums and FHA-approved manufactured housing.
Renovations or Repairs Allowed?	For purchase, and to build, repair, renovate, or relocate homes, or to purchase and prepare sites. May be used to refinance debts when necessary to avoid losing a home or to make rehab affordable.	Yes	Loans and grants to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards. Grants are for elderly homeowners only.
New Construction?	Yes	Yes	No
Loan Types	Purchase and cash-out refinances.	Purchase only.	Home repair and improvement only.
Loan Term	30 years (manufactured homes); 33 years (other single-family homes), except 38 years for borrowers with incomes <60% of area median.	30 years	20 years
Borrower or Household Income Restrictions?	Yes. Limited to 80% AMI or less.	Yes. Maximum 115% of AMI.	Yes. At or below 50% AMI.
Geographic Restrictions?	Rural areas.	Rural areas.	Rural areas.
Down Payment or Minimum Investment?	Can be 0%. Set by state and local offices.	Can be 0% down payment. Determined by first-mortgage program.	Not applicable.
Other Program Features or General Information	Check with state Housing Finance Agencies partnerships with Rural Development.	See first-mortgage program.	Grant is subject to repayment if property is sold within 3 years of receiving assistance.
To Find Out More	Check with local Rural Development office.	Check with local Rural Development office.	Check with local Rural Development office.



Caution:

Call Early for Help with Missed Mortgage Payments

While housing counseling agencies can help you think about your options if you become delinquent on your house payment, the earlier you go to them the better. The longer you wait, the more options you give up. It is a little easier to develop a plan to pay back one or two missed payments. However, any missed payments over the course of a year add up to a lot of money and make it much harder to recover financially. Once your lender starts the foreclosure process, it is very difficult to stop it.

No matter where you live in the United States, you can call 888-995-HOPE, where trained counselors can help you work out delinquency and foreclosure issues.

“I’m Not Ready for the Road to Housing Recovery!”

Does even the thought of beginning the road to housing recovery leave you overwhelmed and confused? If so, you are certainly not alone. Often the best way to get going is to get the answers to a few fundamental questions first. Below you’ll find a list of questions and answers that just might remove a few of the initial roadblocks. And if you are still not sure you’re ready, this section of the guidebook is full of resources you can tap in preparing for your journey.

Q. *I lost my copy of my deed, lease, insurance and other important documents — how do I replace them?*

- A. Go to www.governor.ny.gov/resources/storm#lostdocument, for help in New York or call the New Jersey Disaster Legal Services hotline at 888-541-1900 for some excellent advice on how to replace lost documents.

Call your insurance company to get a copy of your insurance policy. If you’re not sure how to contact your company, go to the Resource Guides for contact information for your state’s department of insurance.

Q. *I still owe money on a house that got damaged or destroyed by the storm. I can’t afford that payment now on top of my current rent. What do I do?*

- A. First of all, remember that even if your home has suffered damage or perhaps no longer exists, your property still has value.

If you walk away from your home or property and you had a mortgage payment before the storm, you are still responsible for making those payments after the storm. If you abandon your property or stop making your payments, foreclosure may occur. Foreclosure is the legal process your lender can use to take back your home and try to recover what you owe. If this happens, you must move out and the lender will sell your home. If the property is worth less than the amount you owe, you will have to pay the lender the difference.

If you do not pay back what you owe, the lender may seek a judgment against you in court. Both foreclosures and judgments will show up on your credit report, and this will make it harder for you to borrow money or rent an apartment in the future. Avoid property abandonment or foreclosure if at all possible!

Q. *I had emergency rental assistance, but it is ending and I still don't have anywhere to go. What can I do?*

- A. The New Jersey and New York Resource Guides provide contact information about homeless shelters, and other services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

You also may be able to extend your aid through a “recertification” process, or to appeal the decision.

If your appeal isn’t successful, try calling one of the faith-based or nonprofit resources listed in your state’s Resource Guide at Route 4.

See “Getting Help With the Rent,” on page 88, which provides more information on the types of rental assistance available for low-income people. In addition, your state Resource Guide will help you connect to rental assistance in your area.

Finding Rental Housing

In this section we'll discuss options for finding a rental home and getting help in paying your rent.

Using a Rental Agent

Consider using a professional rental agent to help you find and select a unit that's right for you. Experienced rental agents can help match you with a unit that meets your needs. Landlords pay a fee to have their units included in the database, so the service will not cost you anything. Keep in mind that rental agents will only tell you about units whose owners subscribe to the service, and that may not include everything that's available for rent.

You tell the rental agent your rent range, job location, transportation needs, community interests and recreational activities. Their role is to:

- Match your requirements to their database of available units
- Prepare a list of apartments or homes that meet your lifestyle and tell you how to set up an appointment to look at the unit

These services can help narrow your search to a handful of units that meet your requirements, saving you time and travels costs as you go about your search. Some rental agents may be local, but there are others listed on the Internet as well. To learn who to contact, turn to your state Resource Guide at Route 4 of this guide and look in the section on Rental Information.

Some of these sites also offer free roommate-matching services. If you want a shared living situation, you might consider using this service rather than renting a place yourself and looking for a roommate later.

Newspaper Classifieds: Tried and True

Newspaper classified ads are still an important source for apartment rentals. The Sunday ads are usually the most complete. Often daily newspapers will choose another weekday, such as Wednesday, to run another bunch of classifieds.

Getting Help with the Rent

If you lived in an apartment where the rent was subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), or if you had a housing voucher through a public housing authority, you should contact your local affordable housing agency or public housing authority..

If your income is very limited and you are not receiving rent subsidies, then you can apply for rental housing assistance. Please be aware that as of the date of this guide, this is not a

quick solution to your housing needs. While more help is on the way, there are many people who need help with rent. You may also contact housing counseling agencies in your area to explore affordable rental options, including short-term or temporary housing.

There are several types of rental housing assistance:

- **Public housing** is owned and managed by a public housing authority (PHA). You pay 30% of your income toward rent and utilities. You have to be under the income guidelines and live in the properties the PHA owns.
- **The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program** also requires you pay 30% of your income toward rent and utilities, but gives you a voucher that you can use in a privately owned rental unit. Thus, you are not required to live in specific properties.

To apply for public housing or Section 8 vouchers, contact the PHA where you want to live and ask for an application. The Resource Guide for your state at the end of this section tells you how to find the one nearest you.

- **Units that are privately owned, but which were built with low-interest loans or grants from the state and federal government.** In exchange for this assistance, these property owners agree to offer lower rents to tenants whose incomes are less than specified limits.

To apply for a unit in one of these properties, you have to contact the building's owner or property manager directly. This means that, depending on where you want to live, you might have to apply to quite a number of them. If your application is accepted, you will probably be put on a waiting list until a unit becomes available. It is best to keep a written list of the properties you applied to, their contact information, and the date you applied so you can keep track.



Dealing with Property Title Issues

Whether you are rebuilding your hurricane-damaged home or buying a home, you must establish clear title to the property. In this section, we will discuss how you can get help in doing this from title companies and lawyers.

What Is a Title and Why Should I Care?

The term "title" refers to your interest in a piece of property, such as land. It can also refer to the document that establishes your ownership. As a property owner, you want to be sure that your title is "clear" — that is, no one else claims to be the owner instead of you. The way to establish clear title is to search back through deeds and other public records, often as far back as 60 years, to trace the chain of ownership and show that no one else lays claim to the

**Caution:*****Disaster Aid
Requires a
Clear Title***

Many disaster recovery programs are only available to the person who has title to the property. That's why this is such an important issue. If the recorded title holder to your home is no longer living, you must establish your own title. Don't panic! There are ways to do this — see below.

land. A competing claim can threaten your ownership of the land altogether, or cost you thousands of dollars in legal fees to prove that it's yours.

If you live in a home that has been in your family for generations, somewhere along the way you may be missing information about who owned it and when. That makes the title “cloudy,” because then someone else can say the property is theirs. Some people who thought they owned their property have found that they will need legal help to establish clear title.

Most housing loans use the property as collateral because lenders need a way to get their money back if you stop making mortgage payments. That's why lenders want you to have clear title before they give you a loan — they want to make sure that you really do own the property that you're using to back up the loan.

Title Companies and Title Attorneys Can Help

Title insurance companies and title attorneys research public records and trace the line of succession (who owned the property and when). You pay a fee for the research and for resolving any problems that are found. If you have a mortgage on the property, the lender will require you to purchase an insurance policy that protects the lender against competing claims. You should also purchase an “owners policy” so that you are protected as well. You typically pay a separate fee for this “title insurance” as part of your monthly mortgage payment. If someone shows up later and claims ownership, the title insurance company will defend your claim, pay damages and cover your losses.

Most people use the title insurance company recommended to them by their lender or real-estate professional.

Property Surveys Are Part of a Title Search

Lenders or title insurance companies often require a survey to mark the boundaries of the property. A survey is a drawing of the property that shows the boundaries of the property, and marks the location of the house and other structures on the property. You may be able to avoid the cost of a complete survey if you can find the person who last surveyed the property and request an update. Check with your lender or title insurance company to see if an updated survey is acceptable.

Legal Assistance

If you need legal assistance to establish clear title to your property and can't afford a lawyer, there are a few different things to try.

Many people feel that using a licensed, qualified real estate agent is the best way to buy and sell real estate, especially if you do not have a lot of experience yourself. It is easy to be taken by real estate scams, and a good real estate agent will protect you from that.

You might want to work with a licensed REALTOR®. While both real estate agents and REALTORS® are licensed to sell real estate, a REALTOR® is a member of the National Association of REALTORS®. The main difference between a real estate agent and a REALTOR® is that a REALTOR® must subscribe to the REALTOR® Code of Ethics and its underlying Standards of Practice. The standards are much more restrictive and confining than those governing agents who simply hold a real estate license.

Selecting a For Sale by Owner (FSBO) Service

If you feel sure that you can sell the property yourself, a For Sale by Owner service is likely to be available in your area. You pay a fee for this service, but it is less than what you would pay a real estate professional. The service will market your property in publications and on websites, and supply forms and documents, as well as some tips, on screening buyers and selling property. You may still want to get legal advice on the contracts and forms that you use for the sale.

Selling a house by yourself means that you have to show the unit, negotiate directly with the buyer on the purchase and sale agreement, and handle any other issues as they come up. If this concerns you, you can always hire a lawyer to look over the purchase and sale agreement or come with you to the closing.

The websites for two FSBO online services are listed below, but there are many others.

- www.salebyownerrealty.com
- www.forsalebyowner.com

Professionals Who Take the Sting Out of Managing the Repair Process

Homeowners in hurricane-affected areas have many questions. You still may not know whether your house can be salvaged at all. But whether you're repairing storm damage or building new, there are still a lot of unknowns. You may be wondering:

- How will the new flood map elevations and building codes affect me?
- Would I be better off repairing my home or building new?
- If I rebuild, what can I afford to build?
- How can I get help with mold removal?



Getting the Work Done

The housing rehab specialist provides you with a list of contractors who can supply bids and guide you through the bid process.

Once the loan and/or grant and the contractor(s) are lined up, the housing rehab specialist can help manage the construction process. Depending on the agency, this may include guidance on what to expect from working with contractors, to actually coming out to the house to inspect the work that's been completed every time the contractor wants to get paid. If there are problems as the work is done, the housing rehab specialist will help you work with the contractor to resolve the issue. Often the nonprofit organization will escrow, or hold, the loan money on your behalf and only pay the contractor when the work is done to your satisfaction. This can be a great comfort if you have never done this before.

Managing a Home Construction Project Yourself

If you want to get started right away on your home repair or rebuild project, you will have to manage it yourself. Even if you have never done this before, there are tips you can use to protect yourself and make sure the work gets done the way you want.

Listed below are some practical ideas for managing your own construction project. You should start by hiring the right contractor the first time.

Finding a Reliable Contractor

Here are some tips from the FEMA website for hiring contractors:

- ***Beware of anyone who claims to be "FEMA certified."*** This should send up a red flag. FEMA does not certify or endorse any contractors.
- ***Avoid door-to-door offers to do construction work and offers that appear too good to be true.***
- ***Use reliable, licensed and insured contractors.*** Ask to see a license and proof of insurance.
- ***Call your area Better Business Bureau, local homebuilders association or trade council*** and ask if the contractor has any complaints against him or her.
- ***Check references.*** Contractors should be willing to provide the names of previous customers. Call several of them to make sure they were satisfied with the work. You may even want to visit to see the quality of the work yourself.
- ***Ask for a written estimate.*** The estimate should detail the work to be done and have a set completion date. Be sure to read the fine print. Get more than one estimate to compare costs and services.





6. **Contact your insurance agent to discuss having contractors on your property** to see what property and persons are covered. If possible, insure workers who will be on the construction site through a rider to your homeowners insurance policy. This can protect you against any accident on the job site.
7. **Keep track of how much money you've spent** and how much more is needed to finish the project. Compare this often to how much money you have to spend.
8. **Use written contracts** with your subcontractors. Put all changes in writing, and use lien waivers when work is finished. A lien waiver is a release signed by the contractors and suppliers stating that they have been paid for all labor and material that they have supplied on your project. By signing, they relinquish all rights to place a mechanics lien on your property.
9. **Make sure materials are ordered and on-site** before the job is scheduled to start.
10. **Make a final payment only when work is completed.** Legitimate contractors normally do not require more than one-third of the total charges as a down payment, and give detailed initial cost breakdowns of materials. **Don't pay for the work up front or in cash, and wait until the project is done to your satisfaction to make the final payment.** A reputable contractor will not pressure you to sign off on the job if it's not finished properly.

The state Resource Guides at Route 4 contains guidance on where to look for licensed, insured local contractors.

Improving the Energy Efficiency of Your Home

Energy-efficient houses provide many benefits: long-term cost savings; improved comfort and health; and a more durable and more valuable home. ENERGY STAR® helps you make energy-efficient choices. As you consider rebuilding or renovating your home, consider making your home more energy efficient with properly installed insulation and ENERGY STAR® products.

Benefits of Properly Installed Insulation

- **Improved Comfort** — Properly installed insulation keeps indoor temperatures more steady and keeps rooms warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.
- **Lower Utility Bills** — More than 40% of the energy consumed by a typical household goes to heating and cooling. By preventing heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter, insulation reduces utility bills year round.



Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity specializes in building new homes for low-income people. Typically, the buyer helps to build the house with the help of many other volunteers, and then receives a loan with no interest for the purchase. In the weeks following Hurricane Sandy, Habitat pledged to build or repair affordable housing in partnership with low-income families impacted by the storm.

Habitat is very successful in bringing in volunteers and donations to reduce the cost of building homes. It also offers housing counseling to its buyers to help them prepare for ownership. The website, www.habitat.org provides more details about Habitat’s response to Hurricane Sandy.

Lutheran Services in America

Lutheran Services in America member organizations provide a range of services, ranging from health care to disaster response, from services for children and families to care for the elderly, and from adoption to advocacy. Visit www.lutheranservices.org to find member organizations near you.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army mobilizes volunteers, donations, and grants to serve millions of people every year. In the wake of disasters, they help with emergency housing, rent, and mortgage payment assistance. In addition to emergency assistance, the Salvation Army itself provides a range of services, including adult rehabilitation centers (residential programs for men and women with substance abuse issues), emergency shelters, and Meals on Wheels. Visit the website at www.salvationarmyusa.org.

Social Service Agencies

In this guide so far we have talked mostly about resources and assistance to help you with your housing needs. But in order to really recover from the Hurricane Sandy, you may need some other help as well. It may be challenging to find the services you need to keep yourself and your family going. You may need something as basic as day care for your toddler, or as complex as grief counseling to help you deal with what you lost. Perhaps you need to find substance abuse and mental health treatment for a family member or friend. How can you find out about what services are available and where they are offered?

There is not space in this guide to list every social service offered in every affected community. There are just too many to list, and besides, the list changes as new services become available or existing ones end.

Instead, in the state Resource Guides at Route 4 we direct you to some important nonprofit and faith-based groups that serve as resource and information hubs. These groups are likely to know where you can go to get the help you need. If the help you and others need isn’t available, these groups can work with volunteer or public officials to fill that gap in services.

Making Informed Decisions and Steering Clear of Warning Signs



By now you've selected a destination, identified your Roadside Assistance Crew, and learned about the programs and products that may make your journey less bumpy. This section of the guide will provide information and tips for steering clear of the pitfalls, potholes, and roadblocks so you can make informed decisions as you navigate the course.

Along Route 3, you'll find out how to:

- Ensure Internet Access
- Use financial tips to prepare for and recover from disaster
- Improve your access to credit to cover financial gaps in your recovery plan
- Avoid scams, identify theft, and prevent foreclosure — otherwise known as the pitfalls, potholes, and roadblocks to recovery



Financial Fitness and the Road to Housing Recovery

As you follow your road map toward your “housing recovery” destination, you’ll likely find that there are specific steps you can take to ensure a smooth journey. Among these are getting your financial house in order, which includes developing a family budget, dealing with credit issues, and developing a savings plan to give you a cushion when disaster strikes. All of these actions are part of the workout required to become “financially fit” so you can be prepared when disaster strikes and take the most direct route to recovery after the storm has passed.

Tune Up with Financial Tips



Natural or manmade disasters — like floods, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, or hurricanes — can strike without warning and can happen to anyone. Even minor disasters can damage or destroy your property and belongings. Disasters can also make it difficult for you to conduct essential financial transactions.

In addition to planning for your family’s safety and basic needs, such as shelter, food and water, you should be ready to deal with financial challenges, such as how to pay for supplies or temporary housing, if necessary. Being prepared to function financially will give you less to worry about if an unfortunate event happens to you.

If you had only a few moments to evacuate your home — and were away for several days or even weeks — would you have access to cash, banking services, and the personal identification you need to conduct your day-to- day financial life?

The Following Are Some Tips to Help You Be Prepared If a Disaster Strikes:

Sign up for direct deposit — Having your paycheck and other payments transmitted directly into your account will give you better access to those funds by check or ATM. It means you won’t have to deliver the deposit to the bank or rely on mail service, which could be delayed. Ask your employer if this is an option for your paychecks.

Arrange for automatic bill payments — This service enables you to make scheduled payments from your bank account — such as for your phone bill, insurance premiums and loan payments — and avoid late charges or service interruptions. With automatic bill pay, you don’t have to worry about essential bills being paid. In an emergency that can be a real bonus. You generally authorize each company to whom you owe regular payments to make a monthly deduction from your account

Consider signing up for Internet banking services — This also makes it possible to conduct your banking business without writing checks. Many banks and credit unions offer this as a low-cost or free service.



Priorities — Which Path Will You Choose?

When creating a spending plan, it's important to consider your needs and wants. Needs are items needed for basic survival, such as food, water, shelter, and clothing. Wants are things desired but not necessary for basic survival. Sometimes budgeting requires tough decisions so you can eliminate spending on wants to free up money for needs. Remember, everyone has different priorities. Budgeting forces you to determine your family's financial goals and gives you the framework for accomplishing them.

What Payments Should I Make First If I Don't Have Enough Money to Pay For All My Bills

- First, pay off your necessary household expenses, such as rent or mortgage, utilities, and food. You need to pay your rent or mortgage to ensure you don't get evicted or have your property foreclosed. Think about the health and safety of your family when making these types of decisions.

- Many utilities, such as telephone, electric, and gas companies, have programs to lower your bill if you qualify. If you think you need assistance, call the customer service number shown on your utility bill.

What Should I Do If I Can Pay Off My Monthly Household Expenses, But Am Having Trouble Paying Off My Loans?

- Pay off the loan with the highest interest rate first to save on interest payments.
- Talk to your creditor (the bank holding the loan, the credit card company, or another company to whom you owe money). Your creditor may be willing to reduce your payments or change the terms to accommodate your situation. Some creditors might offer extensions (smaller payments over a longer period of time). Some creditors might accept partial payments.
- Get a debt consolidation loan, but be cautious of this option. If loan fees and interest rates are too high, it may not be the best option for you.

- Get professional advice. Check out the Resource Guide in Route 4 for information on how to contact a local housing counseling or nonprofit credit counseling agency that can help you deal with your financial problems. The most reputable organizations charge little or nothing for their services.
- Be cautious of companies that promise to fix your credit problems right away. Credit repair can be a long process that might take several years. Just remember, "If it sounds too good to be true — it probably is."



Caution:

Wants vs. Needs

If you have to make some tough decisions about wants and needs, consider the following questions.

- Why do you want it?
- Is it something you really need?
- Will it help you reach your goal?
- Could you spend your money in a different way?
- Is it something you can live without?

The answers to these questions might help you figure out what is most important so you can direct your money to your priorities.

Sample Credit Report

CREDIT FILE - January 2, 2013 **Confirmation # 0123456789**

Personal Identification Information (This section includes your name, current and previous addresses, and any other identifying information reported by your creditors.)

Name On Report: [Redacted] Length of Ownership: [Redacted]
 Social Security: [Redacted] Date of Birth: [Redacted] (MM/DD/YYYY)
 Current Address(es): [Redacted] (MM/YYYY)
 Previous Address(es): 4 Morgan Blvd., City, State ZIP Reported: (MM/YYYY)
 55 Palmers Road, City, State ZIP Reported: (MM/YYYY)
 Last Reported: [Redacted]
 Previous Employer: [Redacted] (previous type of employment & previous employer)

Please address all future correspondence to:

www.investigate.equifax.com
 Equifax Information Services LLC
 P O Box 740256
 Atlanta GA 30348
 (800) 356-4715
 M - F 9:00am to 5:00pm in your time zone.

In order to speak with a Customer Service Representative regarding the specific information contained in this credit file, you must call **WITHIN 60 DAYS** of the date of this credit file **AND** have a copy of this credit file along with the confirmation number.

Credit Account Information
 (For your security, the last 4 digits of account number(s) have been replaced by *) (This section includes open and closed accounts reported by credit grantors)

Account Column Title Descriptions:

Account Number - The Account number reported by credit grantor	Amount Past Due - The Amount Past Due as of the Date Reported
Date Acct. Opened - The Date that the credit grantor opened the account	Date of Last Payment - The Date of Last Payment
High Credit - The Highest Amount Charged	Actual Pay Amt - The Actual Amount of Last Payment
Credit Limit - The Highest Amount Permitted	Sched Pay Amt - The Requested Amount of Last Payment
Terms Duration - The Number of Installments or Payments	Date of Last Actvty - The Date of the Last Account Activity
Terms Frequency - The Scheduled Time Between Payments	Date Maj Delq Rptd - The Date the 1st Major Delinquency Was Reported
Months Reviewed - The Number of Months Reviewed	Charge Off Amt - The Amount Charged Off by Creditor
Activity Description - The Most Recent Account Activity	Deferred Pay Date - The 1st Payment Due Date for Deferred Loans
Creditor Class - The Type of Company Reporting The Account	Balloon Pay Amt - The Amount of Final(Balloon) Payment
Date Reported - The Month and Year of the Last Account Update	Balloon Pay Date - The Date of Final(Balloon) Payment
Balance Amount - The Total Amount Owed as of the Date Reported	Date Closed - The Date the Account was Closed

Account History	1 : 30-59 Days Past Due	5 : 150-179 Days Past Due	J : Voluntary Surrender
Status Code	2 : 60-89 Days Past Due	6 : 180 or More Days Past Due	K : Repossession
Descriptions	3 : 90-119 Days Past Due	G : Collection Account	L : Charge Off
	4 : 120-149 Days Past Due	H : Foreclosure	

American Express PO Box 297871 Fort Lauderdale FL 33329-7871 ; (800) 874-2717

Account Number: -0123456789*	Date Opened: 05/1984	High Credit: \$4,400	Credit Limit: \$22,000	Terms Duration:	Terms Frequency:	Months Rev'd: 1	Activity Description:	Creditor Classification:
Items:	Date Reported:	Current Status:	Type of Account:	Type of Loan:	Card:	Interest Account:	Individual Account:	

Credit history & public records

Inquiries that display to companies (may impact your credit score)
 This section lists companies that requested your credit file. Credit grantors may view these requests when evaluating your credit worthiness. Employment inquiries do not impact your credit score.

Company Information	Inquiry Date(s)
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 123-4567	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 456-7890	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 789-0123	

Inquiries that do not display to companies (do not impact your credit score)
 (This section includes inquiries which display only to you and are not considered when evaluating your credit worthiness. - examples of this inquiry type include a pre-approved offer of credit, insurance, or periodic account review by an existing creditor.)

Company Information - Prefix Descriptions:

PRM - Inquiries with this prefix indicate that only your name and address were given to a credit grantor so they can provide you a firm offer of credit or insurance. (PRM inquiries remain for 12 months)

PR - Inquires with this prefix indicate that a creditor reviewed your account as part of a portfolio they are purchasing. (PR Inquires remain for 12 months)

AM or AR - Inquiries with these prefixes indicate a periodic review of your credit history by one of your creditors. (AM and AR inquiries remain for 12 months)

Equifax or EFX - Inquiries with these prefixes indicate Equifax's activity in response to your contact with us for a copy of your credit file or a research request.

ND - Inquiries with this prefix are general inquiries that do not display to credit grantors. (ND inquiries remain for 24 months)

ND MR - Inquiries with this prefix indicate the reissue of a mortgage credit report containing information from your Equifax credit file to another company in connection with a mortgage loan. (ND MR inquiries remain for 24 months)

Company Information	Inquiry Date(s)
Equifax	(MM/DD/YYYY)
PO Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374-0241	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 123-4567	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 456-7890	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 789-0123	
Creditor	(MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY) (MM/DD/YYYY)
Address, City, State ZIP Phone: (555) 123-4567	

Inquiries (soft)

More Helpful Information in Your Credit Report

Para información en español, visite www.ftc.gov/credit o escriba a la FTC Consumer Response Center, Room 130-A 600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580.

A Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act

Commonly Asked Questions About Credit Files

- Q. How can I correct a mistake in my credit file?**
A. Complete the Research Request form and give details of the information you believe is incorrect. We will then check with the credit grantor, collection agency or public record source to see if any error has been reported. Information that cannot be verified will be removed from your file. If you and a credit grantor disagree on any information, you will need to resolve the dispute directly with the credit grantor who is the source.

EQUIFAX RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

Upon completion, please return this document to the following address:

Equifax Information Services LLC
 P O Box 740256
 Atlanta GA 30348

Or, if you prefer, you may initiate an investigation request via the internet at:
www.investigate.equifax.com

Confirmation Number: 0123456789

Intentionally making any false statement to a consumer reporting agency for the purpose of having it placed on a consumer report is punishable by law in some states. To ensure that your request is processed accurately, please enlarge photocopies of any items that contain small print (i.e. driver's license, W2 Forms, etc.). Photocopies that are not legible or contain highlighting may cause us to request that you resubmit your requests for clarity.

If your identifying information differs from the information listed on this form, please fill in the correct information in the space provided below each item.

Name: Jonathan Q. Public SS#: XXX-XX-1234
 DOB: January 1, 1950
 Current Address: 123 Street, Town, State, ZIP
 Previous Address(es): 4 Morgan Blvd., City, State ZIP
 55 Chalmers Road, City, State ZIP

Please provide a photocopy of your driver's license, social security card, or a recent utility bill that reflects the correct information.

Employment: (name of employer)
 Daytime Phone Number: Evening Phone Number:
 List other names which you have used for credit in the past.

For security purposes, if you want your credit report to display no more than the last 4 digits of your social security number (check here)

Credit Account Information

Company Name _____ Account Number _____
 Reason for investigation: Not Mine Paid in Full Current/Previous Payment Status Incorrect Account Closed
 Other (Please explain) _____

Company Name _____ Account Number _____
 Reason for investigation: Not Mine Paid in Full Current/Previous Payment Status Incorrect Account Closed
 Other (Please explain) _____

Summary of your rights: This section includes information on your right to know what is in your file, your right to ask for a credit score, your right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information as well as how to contact various federal agencies.

Commonly asked questions: This question and answer section explains how to correct mistakes in your credit file as well as where to go for more advice and assistance.

Research Request Form: If there appears to be incorrect information in your credit file, use this form to request an inquiry or to update your contact information.

Brake Now and Identify Any Errors on Your Credit Report

You should review your credit report from all three major credit bureaus at least once each year. Check for errors or omissions in any and all of the three reports. Differences may exist between the information they show and what you know about your credit history. If you find an error or something left out, contact the credit bureau directly. You can use the form letter that follows to alert the credit bureaus of errors on your credit report and ask that they be corrected.

Sample Dispute Letter

Date

Your Name, Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

Email address

Complaint Department

Name of Credit Reporting Agency Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to dispute the following information in my file. I've [highlighted or circled] the items I dispute on the attached copy of the report I received.

This item [identify item or items disputed by name of source, such as name of creditor or tax court, and identify type of item, such as credit account, judgment, etc.] is inaccurate or incomplete because [describe what is inaccurate or incomplete and why]. I am requesting that the item be deleted [or request another specific change] to correct the information.

Enclosed are copies of [use this sentence if applicable and describe any enclosed documentation, such as payment records or court documents] supporting my position.

Please reinvestigate [this matter or these matters] and [delete or correct] the disputed item[s] as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Your name

Enclosures: [List what you are enclosing]



Caution:

**Credit Repair
Steer Clear Here!**

You see the ads in newspapers, on TV, and on the Internet. You hear them on the radio. You get flyers in the mail. You may even get calls from telemarketers offering credit repair services. They all make the same claims:

“Credit problems? No problem! We can erase your bad credit — 100% guaranteed. Create a new credit identity — legally.”

“We can remove bankruptcies, judgments, liens, and bad loans from your credit file forever!”

Do yourself a favor — and save some money too. Don’t believe these statements. They’re just not true. Only time, a conscientious effort, and a plan for repaying your debt will improve your credit report.

- **Consider consolidating debts.** You may find it easier to make a single payment rather than several. You might also get a lower interest rate that will make it easier to keep up with payments. Remember that debt consolidation is not a cure-all. You have to learn to control your spending to avoid future debt.
- **Don’t expect miracles.** Don’t believe companies that promise to fix a poor credit rating quickly and painlessly for a fee. As long as it is accurate and timely, negative information cannot be removed from your credit record. The only way to improve a credit record is to let time pass and establish a record of on-time payment.
- **Contact a credit counseling organization.** You can obtain referrals for organizations in your area that will work for your best interest through the National Foundation for Consumer Credit, **www.nfcc.org**, **800-388-2227**. If you have decided to tackle your credit issues in an effort to qualify to buy a home, contact the NeighborWorks® organization nearest you by clicking on **www.nw.org/network/Utilities/NWOLookup.asp**.

The Truth About Credit Repair

Only consistent efforts and making payments on your debts will improve your credit. Therefore, it’s important to carefully choose your credit counseling agency. Some businesses make promises about repairing your credit that they cannot deliver.

Beware of companies that:

- Promise to erase your bad credit or remove bankruptcies and judgments from your credit file. If negative information is in your credit report, but it’s accurate, then no one can have it removed.
- Promise you fast and easy credit repair. If you have bad credit, it can take years to repair your credit legitimately.
- Offer to create a new identity for you. If you make false statements on loan applications, or use a fake Social Security number, you will be committing fraud. You can also be charged for mail or wire fraud if you use the mail or telephone to apply for credit and provide false information.
- Want you to pay before they will provide any service. The company might not be legitimate.
- Will not tell you your rights and what you can do yourself. Remember you can order the credit report yourself. If you see errors on your report, you can also request that the credit reporting agencies correct them.

Avoiding the Pitfalls, Potholes, and Road Blocks to Housing Recovery

Becoming a homeowner is a major milestone, but once you purchase a home, you'll need to take steps to maintain and protect it. This section of the guide will explain some of the things you can do to keep and maintain your home. The section provides information about using your home equity wisely, saving for emergencies, avoiding credit traps, avoiding foreclosure, managing taxes, and handling home maintenance and home repairs.



Avoiding the Debt Detour

Accumulating additional debt can cause you to detour off the road to housing recovery. New home buyers should avoid taking on any new debt for car loans, credit cards or revolving credit for at least one year after closing. It will take that long to get used to making the new mortgage payments and to really understand how much it costs to take care of your home.

Avoid the Foreclosure Pot Hole—It's a Big One!

Many homeowners find themselves in situations where they are unable to make their mortgage payments and are in very real danger of losing their homes to foreclosure. If you can't make your next mortgage payment, or if you are already behind, you need immediate help. The Homeownership Preservation Foundation has joined forces with mortgage lenders, nonprofit organizations, and city governments to provide homeowners with free assistance and resources to help you get back on track. Visit the Hope for Homeowners website at www.995hope.com, or call the homeownership hotline at **888-995-HOPE (4673)** for immediate assistance.

What Should I Do If I Miss a Payment?

Asking for help is the most important factor in preventing foreclosures.

- Notify the bank as soon as you know your payment will be late. Calling when you are one or two months late is better than calling when you are four months behind in payments. Remember that foreclosure is not in the best interest of lenders. Lenders report that it costs up to \$50,000 or almost half the loan balance each time they write off a foreclosure.
- Work it out. Depending on the situation, the lender may lower the interest rate, lower the borrower's monthly payment, or enter into a repayment agreement for missed payments.



Caution:

Predatory Loans — Don't Take This Dead End Street

- **Shop Around** — Don't trust door-to-door or phone salespeople offering you a "bargain."
- **Watch out for bad loan terms** — Avoid balloon payments, high interest rates, prepayment penalties, and credit life insurance.
- **Ask questions** — Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand something; you have a legal right to know the total cost of your loan, the annual percentage rate, the monthly payments, and how long you have to pay back the loan.
- **Don't sign** — Don't sign a blank document or anything the lender promises to fill in later or any document you have not read or do not understand.
- **Talk to someone you trust** — Contact a nonprofit housing organization to review the loan before you sign anything.
- **If you think you are a victim of home loan fraud** — File a complaint with the your local attorney general's office.
- **Right of rescission** — You have three days to cancel a home equity loan! If you review the loan terms and change your mind, contact the lender to cancel and don't take no for an answer.

Who Do Predatory Lenders Target?

Predatory lenders look for homeowners who have a lot of equity in their homes, but have poor credit and need cash. Seniors, people of color, and low- and moderate- income households are frequent targets. Often, a victim of predatory lending will be in a financial crisis brought on by an illness, a sudden loss of income due to job loss or death of a spouse, or a need for major home repairs. The victim may have fallen behind on loan payments and may be facing foreclosure.

What If I Think I Have a Predatory Loan?

Get help from a trusted source. Contact legal aid and the state attorney general's office to file a complaint. Most communities have offices that provide free legal services to individuals with limited income. The state Resource Guide in Route 4 includes contact information for legal help in your area.

In addition, you can look in the community services pages of your phone book or look in the Yellow Pages under "Legal Services" for the phone number of the local program. The American Bar Association has a directory of volunteer (pro bono) lawyer programs. These programs use local lawyers who have agreed to provide free legal services. The following website can help you find assistance in your area, www.findlegalhelp.org.

Loan modifications are also subject to scams. In response to the proliferation of loan modification scams, NeighborWorks® America launched a national public education campaign to empower homeowners to identify, avoid, and report loan modification scams. Visit the website of Loan Modification Scam Alert at www.loanscamalert.org. to learn about some of the most common scams, hear testimonials, and report suspected scams. You may also call at **888-995-4673**.



Caution:

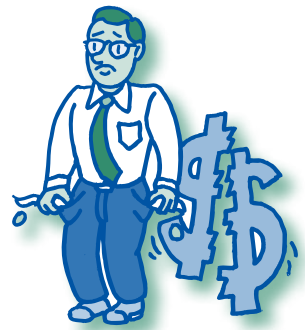
Before Deciding to File for Bankruptcy

- Reduce your spending. Consider a smaller home or vehicle. Slash your spending, and you may be surprised to find enough money left over to repay the debt you’ve built up.
- Talk with your creditors. Despite what you may have heard, your creditors are often willing to work out a payment plan to help you pay off what you owe. This is preferable to having a bankruptcy filing on your credit report.
- Talk with a nonprofit counseling agency. These agencies can help you create a plan that will handle all of your debts.
- Talk to at least 3 bankruptcy attorneys (during free initial counseling sessions) to get feedback about filing. Be sure you understand the consequences of declaring bankruptcy.
- You may be able to borrow against a workplace retirement plan, stocks, other securities you own, or the cash value of a life insurance policy in order to pay off your debt. However, all of those options have serious implications. Make sure you analyze the potential risks and consequences thoroughly.

- Carefully choose your Personal Identification Number or PIN. When you set up your PIN for your ATM or debit card, don’t use a number that a person could easily associate with you, such as a birth date, Social Security number, or phone number. Use a number that only you know and that you can recall easily.
- Check your credit. Order a copy of your credit report every year. Catch mistakes and fraud before they ruin your personal finances.

Caution! Bankruptcy May Not Be the Best Choice

Personal bankruptcy as an option for dealing with debt should be the “last resort” option because the results are long-lasting and far-reaching. A bankruptcy stays on your credit report for seven to 10 years, and can make it difficult to obtain credit, buy a home, get life insurance, or even get a job.



The Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act, which took effect in October 2005, makes it harder to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and steers more people toward repaying a portion of their debts through a Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Instead of wiping out debts under Chapter 7, many debtors will have to establish up to five-year repayment plans under a Chapter 13 plan.

This law includes several changes that might affect you. You won’t be allowed to file for Chapter 7 if your income is above your state’s median and if you can afford to pay 25 percent of your unsecured debt. You also may not discharge new debt. If you have credit card debt, cash advances, and other forms of consumer debt borrowed within 70 days of a bankruptcy filing, it might not be discharged under the new law. The court will review your finances and determine how much you have available to pay debts, and you will be required to undergo credit counseling before applying for bankruptcy.

Know Your Rights

As a consumer, you have rights that are protected by law. Consumer credit laws regulate creditors and the three major credit reporting agencies and are designed to protect you. For example, they protect you from discrimination by companies that give credit and require creditors to give reasons for not doing business with you. If you feel you have not been treated fairly or have been discriminated against, consumer credit laws will be important to you.

Below is a summary of some of the key consumer protection laws that you should understand so that you are treated fairly and within the law.



Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA)

The Equal Credit Opportunity Act protects consumer rights throughout the loan process. Lenders cannot discourage you from applying for a loan based on certain characteristics you may have. The ECOA makes sure that credit is available to all applicants who qualify for credit, without regard to the following factors: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or receipt of public assistance income. You also cannot be denied credit if you exercise your rights under the Consumer Credit Protection Act (for example, you cannot be denied a loan because you have filed a complaint against the bank). ECOA also restricts the lender from requesting certain information during the loan application process.

Fair Credit Billing Act

The Fair Credit Billing Act requires creditors to promptly credit payments and correct billing mistakes for open-ended accounts such as credit cards. It also allows you to withhold payments on defective goods. Examples of billing errors include a charge for something you did not buy, a charge that is different from the actual purchase price, or an error in math (for example, the total does not add up, or there is an error in the amount of interest added).

If you think there is an error on your bill you should notify your creditor in writing within 60 days of receipt of the incorrect bill. Include your name, account number, and what you believe is the error. Keep a copy of the letter.

Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA)

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act requires that debt collectors treat you fairly and bans unfair, deceptive, or abusive debt collection practices. This law applies to personal and household debts including: money owed for the purchase of a car, medical care, or charge accounts. Under this law, debt collectors other than your creditor cannot:

- Contact you at any unusual time or place.
- Contact you at work if you have informed them not to call you there.

For individuals affected by the hurricane and ready to seek assistance in rebuilding their financial lives by obtaining lost or destroyed personal identification documents, assistance with deferring mortgage payments and obtaining copies of destroyed financial documents, call the toll free number above. HCA’s free services include:

- Predisaster preparedness seminars, featuring the EFFAK and PDPG documents
- Emergency budget counseling
- Emergency credit management
- Assistance with deferring mortgage payments
- Assistance with working with your creditors
- Referrals to government and private agencies
- Assistance with obtaining copies of destroyed financial documents.
- Insurance claims assistance

National Consumer Law Center (NCLC)

7 Winthrop Square
Boston, MA 02110-1006
Telephone: 617-542-8010
Fax: 617- 542-8028
Website: www.nclc.org

NCLC is a nonprofit consumer law resource center for legal answers, policy analysis, technical assistance, and legal support, particularly on issues involving consumer fraud, debt collection, consumer finance law, and homeownership. NCLC provides free consumer information on topics such as credit, scams, fraud, foreclosure prevention, and reverse mortgages. It also sponsors conferences, trainings, and other events on consumer issues. NCLC’s book *Surviving Debt* can be ordered from the website for a fee.

National Consumers League (NCL)

1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: 202-835-3323
Fax: 202-835-0747
E-mail: info@nclnet.org
Website: www.nclnet.org

The NCL uses research and education to advocate for consumers. NCL sponsors national conferences and legislative briefings that address consumer issues. It develops training materials, low-cost brochures and publications on subjects such as consumer credit. NCL also operates the National Fraud Information Center, a toll-free hotline that offers help and support to victims of telemarketing and Internet fraud.



National Foundation for Consumer Credit (NFCC)

2000 M Street, NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-677-4300 or toll free 800-388-2227
Website: www.nfcc.org

NFCC is a network of more than 1,300 nonprofit agencies that provide money management education, confidential budget, credit, and debt counseling, and debt repayment plans for individuals and families. To find an affiliate agency in your area call 800-388-2227.

NeighborWorks® America

1325 G Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
Telephone: 202-220-2300
Websites: www.nw.org; www.keystomyhome.org

A nonprofit organization created by Congress, NeighborWorks® America has a national network of more than 240 community-based organizations in 50 states creating healthy communities through the work of thousands of residents, business people, government officials and other partners. Together with national and local partners, NeighborWorks® America creates new opportunities for residents while improving communities. NeighborWorks® provides consumer information about the homebuying rules of the road at www.keystomyhome.org.

Other Federal Agencies

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20580

Telephone: 202-326-2222 or toll free 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357)

Websites: www.ftc.gov; www.fraud.org; www.consumer.gov/topics/identity-theft

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. The FTC enforces a variety of federal antitrust and consumer protection laws, and other financial and lending practices affecting consumers — including Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) violations involving mortgage and consumer finance companies.

As part of its consumer education campaign, the FTC has a large clearinghouse of consumer fact sheets in English and Spanish and lists of federal Rules and Acts that protect consumers on a variety of topics, including credit, privacy and investments.

Social Security Administration

Office of Public Inquiries

Windsor Park Building

6401 Security Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21235

Telephone: 800-772-1213

Website: www.ssa.gov

Social Security was set up in 1935 as a way for the community to respond to life's uncertainties and times of vulnerability, such as unemployment, illness, disability, death, and old age. The SSA pays retirement, disability and survivors benefits to workers and their families and administers the Supplemental Security Income program. It also issues Social Security numbers. Its website has helpful information on these programs and how to apply for benefits.

Resource Guide for Finding the Assistance Crew Nearest You



Route 4 comprehensive Resource Guide for finding valuable Hurricane Sandy disaster resources in New Jersey.





Habitat for Humanity

www.habitat.org

Habitat for Humanity is responding to Hurricane Sandy by providing community clean up, emergency home repairs, rehab services and on-going support through Habitat ReStores which provides discounted construction materials and furniture. Visit the website for more information.

Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSM/NJ)

3 Manhattan Drive
Burlington, NJ 08016
Telephone: 609-386-7171
Fax: 609-386-7191
Email: info@lsmnj.org
Website: www.lsmnj.org

Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSM/NJ) is a faith-based, not-for-profit organization whose scope of services is broad. Each year LSM/NJ reaches out and assists more than 5,300 people — providing hospitality, healing, and hope to residents of New Jersey regardless of religious affiliation or background. As a mission-driven organization, we continually work to create new programs and build facilities to care for those individuals and families that require our help.

Red Cross

www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter

The Red Cross responds to approximately 70,000 disasters in the United States every year, ranging from home fires that affect a single family to hurricanes that affect tens of thousands. The Red Cross provides shelter, food, health and mental health services to help families and entire communities get back on their feet. Find your local Red Cross chapter by visiting the website.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army New Jersey Divisional Headquarters
P.O. Box 3170
Union, NJ 07083
Telephone: 908-851-9300
Fax: 908-688-4460
Email: nj@use.salvationarmy.org
Website: www.use.salvationarmy.org/use/www_use_nj.nsf

New Jersey has quite a number of Salvation Army locations. The best way to find the one closest to you is to look online at the website above, or to call the office of the New Jersey Divisional Headquarters. The area command office, listed above, either offers or coordinates the Salvation Army's social services in their area.

Resource Guide for Finding the Assistance Crew Nearest You



Route 4 comprehensive Resource Guide for finding valuable Hurricane Sandy disaster resources in New York.



The NeighborWorks® Network

NeighborWorks® America supports over 235 independent, community-based nonprofit organizations across the country known as the NeighborWorks® Network. These nonprofits provide valuable housing-related services in more than 4,500 communities in America. They are staffed by counselors who serve as advocates to families who already own their homes or who are interested in pursuing homeownership. Services include prepurchase counseling, financial fitness classes, default and foreclosure prevention counseling, affordable financing and a host of other products and services. To locate the NeighborWorks® Network member nearest you, go to www.nw.org and use the “Find a NeighborWorks® Organization” link located on the right hand side of the home page. You can search by your zip code or search the state of New York.



NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions

The NeighborWorks® Center for Foreclosure Solutions (CFS) offers free counseling nationwide through its hotline at 888-995-HOPE (4673). If you are delinquent and facing foreclosure, its trained counselors may be able to help you develop a budget and spending plan that can get you back on track.

At <http://nw.org/network/foreclosure/default.asp>, you can find links to locate a foreclosure counselor, learn about mortgage modification scams, and explain mortgage refinance and modification options. Also available are links to videos and other resources on what to do when facing foreclosure, how to prevent foreclosure, and other topics.

Finding Affordable Rental Units in New York

New York City Affordable Housing Resource Center

www.nyc.gov/html/housinginfo/html/home/home.shtml

At the New York City Affordable Housing Resource Center you will find information on all aspects of City housing, including renting an apartment, buying a home, and apartment maintenance issues. You can also find all of the City's affordable housing lottery listings.

New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)

www.nyc.gov/hpd

HPD works with its governmental, community, non-profit and for-profit partners to strengthen neighborhoods, increase the availability of well-maintained, affordable housing, and enable more New Yorkers to become homeowners. Contact HPD to learn more about long-term affordable housing options.



Alert:

Creating a Healthy Home: A Field Guide for Clean-Up of Flooded Homes

This is a practical guide developed by Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., the National Center for Healthy Housing, NeighborWorks® America, and Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans. The methods were tested on four flooded homes in New Orleans.

You can download the guide for free at www.practitionerresources.org/cache/documents/54278.pdf.

Finding a Contractor/Home Repair

Community Development Corporation of Long Island, (CDCLI)

Telephone: 631-471-1215

Email: info@cdcli.org

Website: www.cdcli.org

CDCLI offers emergency home repair loans to residents of Nassau and Suffolk counties. You can receive more information by visiting the website above or via telephone or email.

Homeadvisor.com

www.homeadvisor.com

Home Advisor.com (formerly known as ServiceMagic.com) can help you find contractors to fit your needs. If you answer some simple questions about your building needs, at the Home Advisor website you can find a list of prescreened contractors.

Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City, Inc. (NHSNYC)

www.nhsnyc.org/

Provides direct emergency relief loans for the repair or reconstruction of homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Visit the website above for additional information and a list of borough specific telephone numbers.

NYC Rapid Repairs Program

www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/2012/rapid_repairs.html

This program will send teams of contractors and City inspectors into neighborhoods impacted by Hurricane Sandy to make necessary repairs to damaged homes.

Homeowners are able to sign up for NYC Rapid Repairs by going to www.NYC.gov, calling 3-1-1, or visiting one of New York City's Restoration Centers. Interested homeowners will need a FEMA ID number, which they can get by registering at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, calling 1-800-621-3362, or visiting one of NYC's Restoration Centers (www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/2012/dasc.html).



Faith-Based Organizations and Social Service Agencies

2-1-1 Search

A search engine that finds 2-1-1 call centers or other information and referral related sites in the United States. In New York, you can find a comprehensive guide listing disaster response and social service providers for Long Island (**www.211longisland.org**) and the Hudson Valley counties of Dutchess, Ulster, Sullivan, Rockland, Orange, Westchester and Putnam (**www.hudson211.org**). In New York City, call 3-1-1 for social service and other important information.

Catholic Charities

www.catholiccharitiesny.org

Check with Catholic Charities for mental health services, information and referral, help with rent or mortgage payments, and assistance with a range of other post-disaster issues. See the website to find the Catholic Charities nearest to you.

Habitat for Humanity

www.habitat.org

Habitat for Humanity is responding to Hurricane Sandy by providing community clean up, emergency home repairs, rehab services and on-going support through Habitat ReStores which provides discounted construction materials and furniture. Visit the website for more information.

Lutheran Social Services of New York

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1244
New York, NY 10115
Telephone: 212-870-1100
Website: **www.lssny.org/site/sandy-get-help**

Lutheran Social Services of New York has launched Lutheran Disaster Response of New York, an alliance of Lutheran agencies responding to disaster. For more information see the website above.

Red Cross

www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter

The Red Cross responds to approximately 70,000 disasters in the United States every year, ranging from home fires that affect a single family to hurricanes that affect tens of thousands. The Red Cross provides shelter, food, health and mental health services to help families and entire communities get back on their feet. Find your local Red Cross chapter by visiting the website.



Navigating the Road to Housing Recovery

A step-by-step guide for individuals and families affected by Hurricane Sandy



Working Together for Strong Communities



Developed jointly by



NeighborWorks® America
www.nw.org



FDIC
550 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20429
www.fdic.gov