

Hurricane Sandy: Recovery Efforts One Year Later

“There's nothing more important than us getting this right. And we're going to spend as much time, effort and energy as necessary to make sure that all the people in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut know that the entire country is behind them in this difficult recovery effort. We are going to put not just 100 percent, but 120 percent behind making sure that they get the resources they need to rebuild and recover.” -- President Obama, November 3, 2012

Nearly one year ago, communities across a dozen states in the Northeast experienced the devastating and tragic effects of Hurricane Sandy. Communities were shattered, families were torn apart, homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed, and lives were upended. But brick by brick, block by block, we are rebuilding. The impacted communities will come back stronger and the federal government will continue to stand right by their side as we continue to recover and rebuild.

Over the past year:

- The Obama Administration has provided direct assistance to more than 230,000 people and small businesses in the form of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) individual assistance, Small Business Administration (SBA) grants and loans and Department of Labor (DOL) employment and training services.
- Further, the administration has announced over \$39.7 billion in funding for recipients, and more than \$13.5 billion of this has already been paid out. This includes:
 - More than \$1.4 billion that FEMA has provided directly to more than 182,000 individuals impacted by Hurricane Sandy.
 - More than \$2.4 billion in low-interest loans through the SBA to individuals and businesses.
 - More than \$3.2 billion in FEMA assistance to state, local and tribal governments for emergency protective measures, debris removal, and repair and replacement of infrastructure in the hardest hit areas.
 - \$10.4 billion in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including \$5.4 billion of CDBG-DR funds allocated within 8 days of the signing of the Sandy-supplemental into law. This represented the fastest ever allocation following the signing of an appropriations bill.
 - More than 26,000 households have already been assisted through CDBG housing programs across the region, with more than \$157 million paid out to these beneficiaries.

- Already more than \$2 billion in infrastructure funds are at work in dozens of projects across the region.
- More than \$5.7 billion made available from the Federal Transit Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration has announced more than \$500 million for recovery efforts.
- \$569 million in grants from the EPA to New York and New Jersey for improvements to wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities.
- More than \$74 million in FEMA Hazard Mitigation grants to implement long-term mitigation measures to minimize or prevent future damages.
- More than \$28 million in Disaster Unemployment Assistance to disaster survivors.
- \$47 million in National Emergency Grants from DOL's Employment and Training Administration, which also helped more than 11,000 individuals who lost their jobs as a result of Sandy receive approximately \$13.2 million.
- More than \$50 million in Disaster Case Management to connect disaster survivors to resources and services of multiple agencies.
- \$6.2 million obligated by the Department of Agriculture for 22 projects which covered emergency food assistance, as well as infrastructure and economic programs. Some of these projects helped repair, rehabilitate and rebuild farmland, watersheds and flood plains.
- More than \$7.9 billion paid out to the more than 143,000 National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policyholders who filed claims. More than 99% of NFIP claims are closed.

Other efforts include:

- FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers worked with State and local governments to reopen 97% of public beaches from New Jersey through Connecticut by Memorial Day 2013 – sending a strong message to thousands of Americans that the shore was open for business.
- FHA and FHFA protected thousands of families who, through no fault of their own, were at risk of foreclosure as a result of Sandy – first by putting in place a foreclosure moratorium and then by cutting red tape to offer families streamlined loan modification.

Additional Points

Response

Debris Removal - In response to Hurricane Sandy, FEMA supported the removal of more than 15 million cubic yards of debris, providing heavily impacted areas the ability to be accessed for important response and recovery activities. Ninety-five percent of the debris from Sandy was removed within the first 100 days of the storm's landfall. The debris included fallen trees, vehicles, boats, drywall and furniture, washers, dryers, and insulation. FEMA also has approved more than 2,400 projects, totaling over \$1 billion, to help remove storm debris in affected states.

Assistance to First Responders – More than \$1.3 billion was obligated to support emergency protective measures including first responder costs for personnel overtime, materials used, and equipment damaged during response activities. This includes uniformed and civilian personnel in areas such as New York City, Jersey City and Hoboken, who patrolled streets; assisted with mandatory evacuations; rerouted traffic away from affected areas; responded to surge 911 calls; and distributed food and in storm affected areas in the path of Hurricane Sandy.

Delivering Disaster Supplies – Before Sandy made landfall, FEMA and the Department of Defense established two Incident Support Bases to position supplies, generators, communications vehicles and other resources closer to areas in the hurricane's path. Over the course of the disaster response, FEMA and its partners provided needed supplies to the affected states, including more than 20 million liters of water, 16 million meals, 1.7 million blankets, 79,000 cots, 138,000 tarps, 500 generators, and 100 infant and toddler kits.

Power and Fuel Restoration - At the President's direction, FEMA and the U.S. Department of Energy established an interagency task force to increase public and private sector coordination as we worked collaboratively to confront the major impacts to the regional utility and fuel distribution infrastructure, with a goal of restoring power and addressing fuel needs as quickly as possible. Through the task force, FEMA was able to draw on resources from across the country, including nearly 300 power-restoration vehicles and hundreds of utility personnel which were airlifted into the impacted region from as far away as California to help states restore power and address fuel supply challenges. The federal government also provided more than 500 generators to help critical infrastructure sites and fuel stations operate until power was fully restored.

Dewatering - In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, there was significant water in tunnels and subway systems. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers drained 150 million gallons of water from the New York City metro area, equivalent to 227 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Task Force/Rebuilding A Stronger Region:

- Since the President took office, the Federal government has made great strides in how we prepare for and respond to catastrophic events like Hurricane Sandy. Given the unique size and scope of the storm, the President recognized that we needed to go even further -- that's why he created the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, chaired by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan.
- The Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force cut red tape and identified and worked to remove obstacles to resilient rebuilding, while taking into account existing and future climate change risks and promoting the long-term sustainability of communities and ecosystems in the Sandy-affected region. Examples of those efforts include:
 - When the Task Force identified opportunities to further accelerate application review, the SBA developed a process to separate small business loan applications from homeowner applications and expedited approval of loan applications meeting minimum credit score and other eligibility requirements.
 - Understanding that designing disaster recovery programs quickly after a disaster requires a great deal of organizational capacity, the Task Force developed "programs in a box" that states and local governments can customize and adopt to speed program implementation. Sandy grantees used these toolkits to establish housing counseling for residents experiencing financial hardship while repairing their homes.
 - For the first time, the federal government announced a uniform minimum flood risk reduction standard for major Sandy rebuilding projects in floodplains. This means how high a property must be elevated above flood levels will not depend on whether it is rebuilt with FEMA, or SBA, or USDA, or HUD CDBG funds. This is particularly important for homeowners who rebuild their homes with funds from more than one program, like FEMA and CDBG. The President directed the agencies to adopt the uniform standard nationwide for federally-funded projects.
 - We saw after Hurricane Katrina that large infrastructure projects were substantially delayed because permitting and review agencies followed procedures that required extensive, time-consuming processes. President Obama created a streamlining process for complex infrastructure projects nationwide. The process was so successful that it is credited with shaving two or more years off the rebuilding timeline for Tappan Zee Bridge repairs. The Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force created – and now HUD leads – a similar process to ensure that the most complex projects will be appropriated coordinated and prioritized by the reviewing agencies.

- The President has been clear – most recently in his Climate Action Plan – that we must prepare our communities for the impacts of a changing climate that are already being felt across the country. The Task Force has also piloted innovative resilience strategies to strengthen communities in the Sandy-impacted region that can serve as models as we prepare communities across the country for the impacts of climate change. By investing now we know we can save billions in future costs (every dollar invested in mitigation saves four dollars down the road).

Sandy Task Force Rebuilding Strategy:

- On August 19, the Sandy Task Force unveiled its [Rebuilding Strategy Report](#).
- The strategy lays out guidelines for the investment of the Federal funds made available for recovery and sets the region on the path to being built back smarter and stronger with several outcomes in mind:
 - Aligning this funding with local rebuilding visions.
 - Cutting red tape and getting assistance to families, businesses, and communities efficiently and effectively, with maximum accountability.
 - Coordinating the efforts of the Federal, State, and local governments and ensuring a region-wide approach to rebuilding.
 - Ensuring the region is rebuilt in a way that makes it more resilient – that is, better able to withstand future storms and other risks posed by a changing climate.
- The recommendations in this strategy will help the communities across the region rebuild and protect them, and our investment in them, from future risks - and, consistent with the President’s Climate Action Plan, they will serve as models for other communities across the country as they prepare themselves for the impacts of a changing climate, many of which are already being felt.