

Senior Citizens applying for federal disaster assistance in West will not cause them to lose any Social Security benefits

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AUSTIN, Texas – Senior citizens who sustained losses from the recent fertilizer plant explosion in West, Texas needn't worry that applying for federal disaster assistance will cause them to sacrifice their Social Security benefits, pay more taxes or give up income-based benefit programs. A grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not add to a senior's taxable income as long as the grant is to help recovery from a disaster like the plant explosion.

"We want to reassure seniors not to be afraid to apply for assistance. FEMA assistance is available to all eligible survivors to include senior citizens," said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Kevin L. Hannes. "Receiving disaster funds will not impact non-FEMA assistance or assistance from other programs." Applying for assistance also does not affect a person's eligibility for Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, supplemental nutrition assistance or other federal programs.

"Seniors need to register with FEMA to be considered for eligibility," Hannes said. "Even if they have registered with their city or a local organization, they still need to register with FEMA."

Seniors and other survivors who live in McLennan County can register online with FEMA at <http://www.disasterassistance.gov/> or via smartphone at m.fema.gov. Applicants may also call 1-800-621-3362 or (TTY) 1-800-462-7585. For 711 Relay or Video Relay Services, call 1-800-621-3362. The toll-free telephone numbers are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

Survivors also may visit the Disaster Recovery Center to speak directly with FEMA specialists who can answer questions. The center is located at the POINTWEST Bank at 210 N. Roberts Rd in West, Texas. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily until further notice.

Low-interest federal disaster loans are available to homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes and private, nonprofit organizations whose property was damaged or destroyed by this disaster. Disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property. Businesses of any size and private, nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets.

Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA's secure Web site at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Disaster loan information and application forms are also available from SBA's Customer Service Center by calling (800) 659-2955, e-mailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov or visiting SBA's Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance>. Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call (800) 877-8339.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. Follow us on Twitter at <http://www.fema.gov/redirect?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.twitter.com%2Ffemaregion6>, and our FEMA Region 6 website at www.fema.gov/region-vi/region-6-preparedness.

SBA is the federal government's primary source of funding for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955 (TTY 800-877-8339).



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