

FEMA Celebrates Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary with Accessibility Advancements

Release Date: July 26, 2023

WASHINGTON -- As the nation celebrates the 33rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), FEMA commemorates its ongoing efforts to advance accessibility in the agency's mission to help people before, during and after disasters.

The ADA guides FEMA's commitment to improving services and programs to be equitably available to people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

"FEMA's people-first approach is about ensuring our programs are accessible to all disaster survivors," said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. "From ensuring survivors in wheelchairs can access our disaster recovery centers, to updating our websites to support screen readers, to offering sign language interpretation, our commitment to meaningful and full access to our programs is driven by our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity and respect."

When the act passed in 1990, it provided civil rights legislation that protects people with disabilities from discrimination by federal agencies and federally funded programs. The law ensures that FEMA and our partners have a strong foundation to work together so that disaster survivors with disabilities have equitable access to services and programs, while preserving their independence.

To support the disability community, FEMA made equity in emergency management one of the top goals in its [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#). In support of this plan the agency has:

- Improved the survivor registration intake process nationwide, expanding disability-related questions, making it easier for people with disabilities impacted by disasters to get the assistance they need.



FEMA

Page 1 of 2

- Continued updating the [FEMA App](#), available in English and Spanish, so that it is now more accessible to people with disabilities. The app is screen reader compatible on iOS (11.0 and later) and Android (5.0) devices. The user interface has also been redesigned to fit a wider variety of screen sizes, making it easier for users to interact with it on their preferred device.
- Worked extensively with state, local, tribal and territorial officials, and nongovernmental and private sector partners and stakeholders to facilitate ADA compliance. This includes removing physical, communication and programmatic barriers that people with disabilities could face.
- Designed programs, services, policies and procedures to include the needs of people with disabilities before disasters happen, rather than solely reacting to barriers that are identified during response and recovery.

Nationwide, disability stakeholders are part of the agency's whole-community approach and work with FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC) teams to create a path to independence for people with disabilities impacted by disasters.

"The ADA drives the future of community resiliency, enablement and universal access for all members of a community," said FEMA Disability Coordinator and ODIC Director Sherman Gillums, Jr. "Founded on the principles of the ADA, we bring effective communication, expanded structural access and equitable opportunities for all to function as members of society. These are the conditions required prior to disaster that will shorten the disaster cycle for all survivors."

To learn more about FEMA's support to people with disabilities, go to [Office of Disability Integration and Coordination | FEMA.gov](#).

Visit [the FEMA Blog](#) to read more on how the agency honors the ADA before, during and after disasters.

