



Disaster Assistance Programs

Description

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides food assistance to those in need in areas affected by a disaster. This Federal assistance is in addition to that provided by State and local governments.

FNS provides disaster food assistance in three ways:

- Provides USDA Foods to State agencies for distribution to shelters and other mass feeding sites;
- Provides USDA Foods to State agencies for distribution directly to households in need in certain limited situations;
- Authorizes State agencies to issue Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits.

Background

FNS' authority to provide emergency food assistance exists under the Food Stamp Act of 1977, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1987, and other authorizing legislation.

USDA Foods for Disaster Assistance

Under the National Response Framework, FNS provides USDA Foods to disaster relief agencies to feed people at shelters and mass feeding sites. States can also, with FNS approval, release USDA Foods to disaster relief agencies to distribute directly to households that are in need. Such direct distribution takes place when normal commercial food supply channels such as grocery stores have been disrupted, damaged or destroyed, or are unable to function.

D-SNAP

FNS can authorize the issuance of D-SNAP when the President declares a major disaster with individual assistance. States must request that FNS allow them to issue emergency benefits in areas affected by a disaster. FNS works closely with States to prepare plans for D-SNAP.

- People who might not ordinarily qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may be eligible for D-SNAP if they had expenses related to protecting, repairing, or evacuating their homes; or if they have lost income as a result of the disaster.
- People who are already participating in the regular SNAP may be eligible for additional benefits under the D-SNAP.
- Disaster benefits are provided like regular program benefits – through an EBT card that can be used at authorized food retailers to buy food.

Contact Information

For complete information, visit www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm