



FAQs

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DONATED RESOURCES

AUSTIN, Texas – Shortly after the April 17 explosion in West, Texas, volunteers, product and monetary donations, and additional support poured in from all over the country. To better understand how some of the donation programs work and to address some unfounded rumors, the following **Frequently Asked Questions** are provided:

Q: There are rumors about FEMA taking away donations that voluntary organizations receive. Is this true?

A: No, this is not true. Voluntary organizations are a key emergency management partner in response and recovery and FEMA supports their efforts. FEMA does not take donations away from voluntary agencies. On the contrary, FEMA encourages donations because they are helping the relief organizations to provide the residents of West and McLennan County with essential and critical services in their time of need.

Q: I feel like I am not getting help fast enough. What can I do?

A: Make sure you register with FEMA. There are several ways to register.

1. You may register by calling FEMA at 1-800-621-3362 or TTY 800-462-7585;
2. You may also visit the Disaster Recovery Center in West at POINTWEST Bank to speak to specialists from the state of Texas, FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and other state and local voluntary organizations that can address any unmet needs you may have.
3. Individuals who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS) may call 800-621-3362; or
4. You may register online by going to www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by smart phone or tablet at m.fema.gov.

Q: I have gotten calls from interested non-profits that would like to volunteer. What do I tell them?

A: If organizations express an interest in helping residents in McLennan County and the City of West, those efforts need to be coordinated on the local level. In the aftermath of tragedy, communities can become easily overwhelmed by the amount of generous people who want to help. Contacting and affiliating with an established organization will help track and identify the specific unmet needs and ensure that survivors' needs are being met in the most effective and efficient way. Have those inquiring call the City of West hotline at **254-826-7550**.

Q: What is the best way to help the residents of West since the explosion?

A: There are several options for those who wish to donate and support the survivors of the plant explosion. This is a very personal decision and is up to the individual making the donation. One option is to make a financial contribution to a voluntary organization of your choice or, you can donate to the West Disaster Relief Fund through the Waco Foundation. Additional information is available online at <http://www.cityofwest.com>. Click on the Disaster Recovery Info link.

Q: I have some friends who want to donate clothing or other personal items. What should I tell them?

A: When making a donation of goods or services, please **confirm what is needed BEFORE taking action**. The amount of unsolicited items that are sent in can overwhelm the community. This is because of the amount of time, money, and resources that must be dedicated to transport, sort, store, and distribute these items. If someone or a group is interested in making a donation of a large quantity or class of item, it's best to reach out directly to the community or local organization that has been designated as the receiver of the items in the City of West. They will ensure that the items go directly to the survivors.

Q: We have volunteers working all over the City of West and McLennan County; can that help the city in any way with its financial obligations?

A: FEMA recognizes that the value of “in-kind” contributions from third parties. As a matter of fact, volunteer “hours” may count towards the non-federal cost share of 25 percent for eligible emergency work after a presidential declaration. In other words the city or county may get credit for volunteer time that can be subtracted from the local share of funding.

Q: I have heard that all assistance and gifts being given to West including food, clothing and water were assigned monetary values and that this was being deducted from any FEMA assistance to the area. Is this rumor true?

A: No, this is not true. FEMA does allow the City of West and McLennan County to document those items and the value could potentially be used to offset other costs the city and county are facing. These donated resources or value assigned to them does not take away from any individual assistance that residents are eligible for or that residents have received. However, FEMA cannot duplicate benefits. So, if you receive insurance or funding from another source that covers your losses, FEMA will not be able to provide grants for those same losses. See additional question below for more information about local cost-shares and how donated resources can benefit the city and county.

Q: I keep hearing people say that volunteers helping in our area are being tracked and their hours and type of work are being logged and documented. Why is this?

A: The City of West and McLennan County must keep very specific records of donated resources that include volunteer hours, the work site, the type of work being performed and any donated equipment and materials. These donated resources must be documented by a local public official or a person designated by a local public official. The value of the donated resources if tracked properly can offset the City of West’s cost share of federal grants for debris removal and emergency protective measures.

Donated resources used on eligible work that is essential to meeting immediate threats to life and property may be credited toward the non-federal share of grant costs under the Public Assistance Program.

Note: Volunteer work or services are not eligible if they are part of the mission of the organization. Also only materials donated by third party entities are eligible for credit. FEMA or state officials can provide more information if you have additional questions. Some examples of eligible work or services can include:

- Removing eligible debris on the right of way.
- Donating equipment to clear right of way debris.
- Donating materials, such as plywood, tarps and tools.
- Search and rescue when part of an organized search and rescue operation.
- Mass food and shelter for victims, when it is NOT the mission of the organization.

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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.