

Spotlight

Department of Homeland Security



Office of Inspector General

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Why This Matters

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in carrying out its mission to support citizens and first responders, disburses billions of dollars annually to assist disaster survivors. This mission exposes FEMA to potential fraud, waste, and abuse in the execution of routine disaster assistance programs. Therefore, it is imperative that FEMA work with the Oklahoma to ensure that they have sufficient policies and procedures in place to detect duplication of homeowner's insurance benefits and that the State remit to FEMA any amounts that individual homeowners received or should have received in settlement for damages sustained to their slabs.

DHS Response

FEMA officials agreed with our findings and recommendation and took immediate action. No further action is required from FEMA.

FEMA's Slab Removal Waiver in Oklahoma 4117-DR-OK

What We Determined

FEMA's disaster-specific waiver of private property debris removal and demolition of private structures is consistent with the authorities the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) grants to the agency in assisting jurisdictions to perform activities that are essential in saving lives, protecting public health and safety, and protecting property. However, during the implementation of a disaster-specific waiver such as this one, the risks of fraud, waste, and abuse are exacerbated. Consequently, this disaster-specific waiver requires increased vigilance to monitor the expenditure of public funds and to protect against potential duplications of homeowners' benefits.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, FEMA Region VI work with Oklahoma to develop policies and procedures that are cost effective under the circumstances to detect duplication of homeowner's insurance benefits and to ensure that Oklahoma remits to FEMA any amounts that individual homeowners received or should have received in settlement for damage sustained to their slabs. FEMA officials provided documentation to support their efforts to work with Oklahoma; therefore, we consider this recommendation to be resolved and closed and to require no further action from FEMA.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@dhs.gov