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## FEMA Streamlines Debris Removal Process for Private Property

Release Date: September 19, 2005  
Release Number: HQ-05-274

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Washington, D.C. — Today the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced a streamlined policy for assisting Gulf Coast states hit by Hurricane Katrina with the massive task of debris removal. The new policy applies in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

While FEMA typically reimburses localities for removing storm-related debris from public rights of way, the agency will also pay for debris from private property. Affected state and local governments need only alert FEMA that widespread debris on private property has created a health and safety risk requiring debris removal and identify the areas that must be cleared. This is done via a letter to the Federal Coordinating Officer in the respective state and a form FEMA is providing to all affected governments. The federal-state agreements already signed by the three states indemnify the federal government against potential claims arising from the debris removal process.

"This new policy affirms FEMA's commitment to simplify the debris removal process," said Acting FEMA Director R. David Paulison. "And while there are special concerns related to entering private property, there are no such challenges for clearing debris from public roads and lands. Communities should be undertaking that work as soon as they are able."

FEMA's Public Assistance program provides funding to state and local governments for emergency work required in responding to disasters and also for repairs to or replacement of damaged infrastructure. In all three states, the federal government is paying for 100 percent of emergency work costs, including debris removal, initially for a period of 60 days and evaluated based on need thereafter.

FEMA has also initiated an expedited funding process, providing affected jurisdictions with funding for emergency work based on preliminary cost estimates. The final amount of assistance is determined when the work is completed and costs are reconciled. Already more than \$750 million has been obligated in the three states and 2.3 million cubic yards of debris has been removed.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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