



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007

CHRISTINE C. QUINN
SPEAKER

TELEPHONE
212-788-7210

January 4, 2013

W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

I am writing in response to reports about houses of worship affected by Hurricane Sandy not being eligible to receive assistance from FEMA to rebuild their damaged properties. At stake are the interests of New Yorkers in the many neighborhoods that were hit hard by Sandy.

Churches, synagogues and mosques serve as a bedrock for our citizens and our communities. They not only provide places for people to worship but operate after-school programs, food pantries, and other critical services. Many of the churches, synagogues and mosques that were damaged by the hurricane are now facing great difficulty reopening their doors.

Although I understand that some oppose this change due to the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state, in this case I don't agree. Recovery from a natural disaster like Hurricane Sandy isn't a matter of state sponsoring religion. It's a matter of helping those in need after one of the worst natural disasters our country has ever seen.

I urge FEMA and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to change the regulations so that they include houses of worship. Under such extraordinary and painful circumstances, houses of worship should be eligible to receive aid on the same basis as all other non-profits damaged by the hurricane.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christine C. Quinn
Speaker