

Summary of the 'Hurricane Member Updates' November 3 2017

Briefing from the National Level- Gladys's Cook

Senator Marco and Senator Nelson sent a letter to FEMA administrator Brock Long expressing their concern about the lack of housing options for survivors. They said delays in providing temporary housing such as manufactured homes and direct leasing options are causing people to live in dangerous unsustainable housing conditions. The letter also notes that the current estimate for housing expectations requires steps for FEMA individual assistance claims 45 days compared to just 10 days during Hurricane Katrina. The Senators asked the agency to increase housing options and the number of inspections as well as cut down the wait time for the FEMA helpline. Furthermore, Sen. Cornyn concerned with the third supplemental spending bill. Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have no CDBG- DR money until the third supplemental bill.

Jason Pettus-State Housing Coordinator

The primary concern is the inspection rate. 86% of inspections had been done; there are over 4,000 inspectors throughout the State of Florida doing inspections. FEMA is diligently going in and doing their inspection services. Also, Individual Assistance was extended to November 13th; therefore there will be a shift in inspection rates which will also affect individual household assistance as more people apply with FEMA through the IA program. Overall, the inspection rate has been a bit of a struggle. Pettus then provided an update on trailers in Florida. One of the problems faced with hurricane Irma was not site-built homes, what took the hardest hit were the manufactured homes specifically those homes that are old. The expectation during recovery pertained to replacing a trailer with a trailer. This concept looks good on paper but the problem is once trailers go through the state they rarely come out. Therefore, trailers should not be the main focus of recovery.

The Direct Leasing Program allows FEMA, the contractor of the property managers to find housing units that usually would not be available in the housing market such as vacation rentals. FEMA can act on behalf of the survivor and direct lease them into a standing infrastructure unit like an apartment, condo, or townhome depending on family size. The Direct Leasing Program is a better solution than giving out trailers because people are placed into existing infrastructure units that are co-compliant and have all the safety features survivors should have. It also keeps them closer to their places of worship, businesses, and schools and allows them to potentially continue their lease after FEMA is gone. Furthermore, the program allows FMR to be bypassed, and allows flexibility that would be provided by rental assistance. For instance, corporate and vacation homes would not be accessible through rental assistance. Rental assistance and the leasing programs are very successful. HUD and the Department of Agriculture discussed long term housing strategies, seeking ways to engage with the State of Florida for long-term housing.

No More Trailers in Florida!

Nejla Calvo- Mobile Home Park Housing advocacy

Legal Services of Greater Miami have been working with organizations to do disaster relief sites by going into the area and doing intakes at the places people may need it. Most cases that are seen have to deal with FEMA application issues, FEMA denials, and landlord/tenant issues following the storm. The key sites are Key Largo, Marathon, Sweetwater, Little Haiti, and Overtown. A daylong event was held in which 30 to 50 people were in attendance and 10 legal cases were taken. The primary focus is mobile home park recovery in the Florida Keys. Concerns came from representing people in the five different mobile home parks that were damaged. The hardest hit areas were Marathon, Big Pine Keys, and Islamorada. Some are designated as mobile home parks while others as RV parks, but have a significant difference under Florida law. Mobile homes have protection and RVs do not, even though their tendencies are the same. Initially, clients were expected to wait for FEMA trailers to come in, thus establishing a FEMA site. The Land use rule, the Route of Growth Ordinance permits developers to offset their developments for hotels. This would not increase affordable housing so that people would not be displaced. *What will happen after the Direct Leasing Program?* Affordability in this case is very important because they are renting the land they are on.

We need to find a way for people to stay in their homes after FEMA assistance runs out!