

FEMA Extends Its Deadline to Participate in Its Multi-Family Lease and Repair Program to February 9, 2023, Giving Tampa Bay Residents More Opportunity to Help in Hurricane Ian Relief



Keith Denning
Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer
FEMA

Interview conducted by:
Bud Wayne, Editorial Executive
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Denning, what are some of your goals and objectives for FEMA when it comes to hurricane Ian relief?*

Mr. Denning: What we want to do is get every family that needs housing into some form of temporary housing while they are repairing or rebuilding their homes. We have a number of ways we do that. So far, we have provided funds for rent or home

repair to 68,000 households that were affected by Ian. We are providing hotel stays for families that are looking for longer term housing.

We also have other forms of assistance in our direct housing program. This includes Direct Lease and Multifamily Lease And Repair. Under Direct Lease we find blocks of apartments, blocks of duplex homes, and we contract with the owners to allow FEMA applicants to come and live in those units for up to eighteen months.

In the Multifamily Lease and Repair program we work with owners of apartment buildings that may have been damaged and need repair. We repair the building at our expense and in return the owners allow our applicants to stay in those units for up to eighteen months. We lease the unit and then we license-in the family. We are paying all of those costs.

CEOCFO: *Is it strictly lease and repair or will you accept just lease?*

Mr. Denning: We are really looking for apartment buildings through Direct Lease. If apartment building owners have units that are vacant that they would like to have occupied and they do not need to be repaired, please contact us about that. Right now, under the Direct Lease program we have 333 units around southwest Florida that we are placing families into.

CEOCFO: *How long a period are you looking to make an agreement for?*

Mr. Denning: It will take about a month to get into that agreement. Once we bring families there to live, they can live there for up to eighteen months.

CEOCFO: *What if the family leaves the apartment before the 18 months are up?*

Mr. Denning: Even during the eighteen months, if the need goes away we may turn units back over to the owner to have others occupy them during that time. It advantageous for both parties. We will work with owners and applicants.

CEOCFO: *How can apartment building owners who would like to participate get started?*

Mr. Denning: They can contact Marvin Jennings, email: FEMA-DR4673FL-MLR@fema.dhs.gov. Phone calls will not be accepted or returned. Please include the following in the subject line of the email: RFI# 70FBR423I00000003 Response: MLR - DR-4673-FL.

CEOCFO: *So currently the deadline for people to apply to FEMA has already passed, but how many people are we looking currently that might still need help?*

Mr. Denning: Right now, we have just under 3,000 families in Florida who are eligible for our direct housing program and these are families that could go into units. We have several options for them and we try to place them in either direct lease, multifamily repair, and of course we have mobile homes and travel trailers, which is a last resort. We really would like to put a family into one of those more comfortable options.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us some of the areas you are focused on?*

Mr. Denning: The counties that are eligible for our direct housing program are the southwest Florida counties from Collier up through Sarasota on the coast, Hardee and DeSoto, and Volusia County over on the east coast because that was affected by hurricane Ian also. So you would have Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Hardee, DeSoto, and Volusia.

"In the Multifamily Lease and Repair program we work with owners of apartment buildings that may have been damaged and need repair. We repair the building at our expense and in return the owners allow our applicants to stay in those units for up to eighteen months." Keith Denning

CEOCFO: *It sounds like you are doing a great job in trying to bring two ends together, the people in need and the people who can help them. It is a humanitarian effort to get people to help each other and that is what you are doing.*

Mr. Denning: Yes, it is and that is what FEMA is here for. We do as much as we can with our financial assistance. Like I said, 48,000 families have been given financial assistance to rent the properties that they find themselves. We wind up with others, we have several thousand right now that need that other form of assistance and that is how we are going to be able to take care of the rest of those families as we go through the process.

CEOCFO: *Is there anything that people should be aware of when working with FEMA?*

Mr. Denning: As far as the Multifamily Lease and Repair Program, there are some stipulations and they will need to know what all those are. We do not believe that they are cumbersome or in any way restrictive but we are the federal government so you are entering into a contract with us. There are some things that we have to make sure occur. Ask for some written documentation on what those requirements are and hopefully you will be able to participate.

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Bio:
Keith Denning
Team Lead IMAT 1
FEMA Region IV

Keith Denning is the Team Lead for the Incident Management Assistance Team 1 (IMAT 1) in the Region 4 Response Division. He leads a 13-member team ready to deploy to disaster sites with the leadership structure necessary to support state, local, tribal and territorial governments in their initial response and recovery.

Denning has served FEMA in several capacities since joining the agency in 2005. In 2012, after five years as a FEMA DAE/Reservist Planning Section Chief, he accepted a full-time position on the Region IV IMAT. In 2014 Keith became Region IV's training manager where he helped coordinate training staff in providing career development, management, leadership and FEMA Qualification System classes. In 2016, he returned to work with the IMAT as the Team Lead for IMAT 1.

Denning began his emergency management career in 1996 as a volunteer with the American Red Cross in Lee County, Fla. Following two years of active service as a volunteer responding to local disasters, he left a 14-year career in the printing industry and accepted a position as Director of Emergency Services with a Red Cross chapter in Southwest Florida. Denning led the local Disaster Services and Armed Forces Emergency Services initiatives, increasing the chapter's response to local emergencies from 35 to 70 incidents per year and sending over 300 emergency messages annually on behalf of military members and their families. To help accomplish these missions, he enlisted more than 100 volunteers

and developed close relationships with first responders and local governments. He introduced the chapter to the AmeriCorps program, which provided four additional full-time staff at lower cost.

Denning has worked numerous disaster operations in his career with the Red Cross and FEMA, including the response to September 11 in New York, Hurricanes Charley, Wilma, Irene (1999 and 2011), Sandy (2012), the 2011 Alabama tornadoes, Hurricanes Matthew, Florence, and Irma. Most recently his team served as the primary FEMA response element for the Surfside Building Collapse in Surfside, Fla.

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