

FEMA's Sandy Flood Insurance Review Taking Longer Than Expected

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency's review of Superstorm Sandy flood insurance claims is taking longer than expected, with fewer than 200 checks issued. FEMA announced in March the review for as many as 142,000 claims after homeowners complained they were shortchanged. A FEMA official expected most reviews would take up to 90 days. The Asbury Park Press reported that U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York found more than half of the 17,078 eligible cases have been waiting more than 90 days and more than a third have been waiting for at least 120 days. Schumer and Gillibrand said that they are "deeply disturbed" by this information because FEMA had initially said that those who entered the Sandy flood insurance claims review process would receive a resolution of their claim within 90 days. The senators urged FEMA to dedicate adequate attention, resources and staff to address these delays. FEMA says that as of Oct. 26, 1,378 policyholders have received a results-of-review phone call from the adjuster serving as their caseworker in the process. The deadline for Sandy policyholders to request a claims review was Oct. 15. FEMA says some 190 checks were issued for an average payment of \$15,000 as of Oct. 26. In all, 786 cases have been closed, which include those receiving additional payment, claims that were voluntarily withdrawn or claims closed without additional payment (i.e. initial claim was found to be properly adjusted). A FEMA spokesperson said in a statement that "FEMA is dead set on getting through these claims as quickly as possible and has taken action to make that happen. We have recently doubled the number of adjusters reviewing claims to speed up the process. The adjusters are now working seven days a week, including day and night shifts."

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