

## **FEMA Individual Aid Deadline Approaching**

By Hector Flores

As we continue our recovery from Hurricane Ian, I wanted to highlight some approaching deadlines and important milestones.

The deadline for applying for Federal Emergency Management Agency individual assistance (and Small Business Administration loans) is January 12. It's important to remember that even if you don't qualify for direct FEMA aid, SBA loans and the state's disaster assistance program require applicants to sign up with FEMA first.

The SBA recently announced it will waive the interest rate for the first year on disaster loans and extend the initial payment deferment period automatically to 12 months. Disaster loan borrowers will now have up to one year from the date of the loan to begin making payments. Interest on the loan will not begin until 12 months from the date of the loan.

You can apply for FEMA assistance by phone at 800-621-3362, online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://DisasterAssistance.gov) or in person at either Disaster Recovery Center at 2280 Aaron St., in Port Charlotte or Tringali Park Recreation Center, 3460 N. Access Road in Englewood. Both are open 8 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Applying for FEMA individual assistance is also the first step if you are applying to the state through the Housing and Recovery Assistance Portal for recovery resources, including housing and sheltering. Visit [IanRecovery.fl.gov/unite](https://IanRecovery.fl.gov/unite) or call 800-892-0948.

### **Debris collection**

Our storm debris contractor surpassed another major milestone earlier this week, when it collected its 2.5 millionth cubic yard of debris. As of Thursday morning, it added another quarter million cubic yards to the total, making it more than 2.75 million cubic yards.

We now estimate the total amount of debris to be collected will be 4.1 million cubic yards. To give you a sense of the scope of the damage caused by Hurricane Ian, we had initially projected we would collect 2.5 million cubic yards.

Our debris contractor has increased the number of units deployed from 170 to 215 and is in the process of adding another 130 units in the coming days.

I know residents are frustrated if their debris has not been collected yet, but I share these milestones to underscore the progress we've been making and assure you we will not stop until all the debris is cleared.

The last day residents can place storm debris for collection is Dec. 31. Debris already placed will continue to be collected. Debris placed in front of properties after Dec. 31 will not be collected.

To track the debris collection street-by-street, view FAQs and more, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris).

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