

TOP-OF-PAGE STATEMENT

“The floods of March and August 2016 left entire Louisiana communities devastated. Many of those affected lost everything. We’ve made progress in the recovery, but there is much more work ahead. The Restore Louisiana Task Force was created to make sure we keep that momentum. The Task Force is an independent group that sets priorities in the rebuilding process. This website serves as a single access point for information on the Task Force, public assistance programs and other vital resources as we continue to Restore Louisiana.”

– Gov. John Bel Edwards

SAMPLE Q&A ABOUT ONGOING FLOOD-RELIEF IN LA.

Q: Recent media reports have raised questions over the pace of progress on flood relief. Has the state delayed any relief programs?

We recognize that families and business owners are under a tremendous amount of stress. Tens of thousands of homes and businesses were damaged throughout the state, some completely. The state has been moving as quickly as possible in seeking federal money for those who were affected. Despite recent statements made by news media, neither the governor’s office nor the Restore Louisiana Task Force has taken any action that would delay the distribution of flood-relief money.

Gov. Edwards’ administration secured an initial federal appropriation of \$438 million just two months after the flooding. That amount is clearly not enough to cover all our needs, and Gov. Edwards is continuing his meetings with the federal government to garner more money.

In the meantime, the Task Force is moving forward with establishing policies and procedures for distributing funds, which is a crucial job. The goal is to develop procedures that are scalable, so that as additional appropriations are made, money can be distributed right away with minimal delays. In fact, we’re farther along with that part of the process at this stage than the recovery after Superstorm Sandy.

Q: If the state hasn’t delayed anything, why haven’t flood victims received money yet?

The \$438 million was appropriated by Congress and allocated by HUD. HUD’s job in this process is to write the rules for spending the money and to ensure the money is spent accordingly. HUD is currently in the process of completing those rules.

We've been assured that HUD officials understand the urgency of our situation, and we've been told the information will be coming soon. Until it does come, the state cannot submit its action plan for spending that money.

Q: The appropriation is \$438 million, but \$311 million has been marked for flood relief programs. What happens to the remaining \$127 million?

The state has to spend part of the appropriation for expenses associated with running the flood relief program. Here's our estimate of how those costs will play out:

About \$88 million is budgeted for project delivery. This covers the cost of contractors, equipment and materials, and public outreach to inform the various communities around the state affected by flooding.

About \$22 million is budgeted for administrative expenses. This includes developing policies and procedures for the flood-relief program and monitoring the program's performance, along with things like legal, accounting, auditing and reporting requirements.

A little more than \$17 million is expected to be required for environmental reviews of damaged homes. This is based on projections that 5,000 homes and rental properties will need a review for repairs or reconstruction. We estimate that the review will cost on average \$3,500 for homes built before 1978 and \$1,600 for those built after 1978.

That leaves about \$311 million for homeowners, renters and businesses affected by the flood. Of course, these numbers are estimates at this time. The Task Force will do everything possible to reduce spending required for these activities, so we can maximize the money available for recovery.

Q: The administration acknowledges that the initial appropriation is not enough to cover the state's entire need. So how will the money be distributed?

This is a difficult issue because so many residents are in need. Since we're waiting on HUD to provide their guidelines, we cannot say with any certainty how the money will be distributed.

We expect that HUD will require the money to go where the biggest need exists. The biggest need will probably be defined as the areas with the most flood damage and the most vulnerable populations.

In that case, the Task Force will likely focus on the following priorities:

- Residents with low-to-moderate incomes
- Houses that suffered major damage as defined by federal guidelines.

- Residents who had no coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program
- Residents who live outside a floodplain
- Households that include residents who are elderly or have a disability

By focusing on residents who live outside the floodplain, we avoid the issue of home elevation or other expensive mitigation efforts. The Task Force would consider those cases in the future. Also, in focusing on residents of low-to-moderate income without insurance, we hope to help those who are most at risk of having to leave their homes for lack of immediate resources.