

Application Deadline Extended To Feb. 10 For Program To Repair Homes Damaged By Hurricane Florence

By Administrator

Tuesday, 05 February 2019 11:27 - Last Updated Tuesday, 05 February 2019 11:30

The deadline for a special program to provide rapid repairs to homes damaged by Hurricane Florence has been extended to Sunday, February 10, 2019 Governor Roy Cooper announced today. That's the date by which eligible homeowners need to complete the forms to participate in North Carolina's Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) program. The program provides partial repairs at no cost to homeowners so Hurricane Florence survivors can return to and remain in their homes while longer-term repairs continue. "We've seen a great response from homeowners interested in the STEP program and we want to encourage even more people to participate so they can stay in their homes and communities as they recover from Hurricane Florence," said Gov. Cooper. "I'm pleased FEMA has agreed to give North Carolinians more time so that more North families can benefit, and I urge eligible homeowners to sign up right away."

The STEP program provides rapid, partial repairs to homes to make them livable and allows survivors to leave temporary housing and return home. The STEP program does not return a home to its pre-storm condition, but it does make it possible for families to return home while long-term repairs take place.

The program is available to homeowners in Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Jones, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender and Robeson counties.

To participate in the STEP program, eligible homeowners must now sign a Right of Entry (ROE) form by February 10, 2019.

STEP program representatives will be available Monday through Friday this week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in three state disaster recovery centers to assist potential participants with questions, verify eligibility and assist in filling out forms. Those locations are:

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Brunswick County – Emergency Operations Center, Old Ocean Highway, Building C, Bolivia

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Craven County – 2825 Neuse Blvd., New Bern

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New Hanover County – Old Independence Mall, 3500 Oleander Dr., Wilmington

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Robeson County – Department of Social Services, 120 Glen Cowan Rd., Lumberton

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Potentially eligible North Carolina storm survivors have received telephone calls, text messages and postcards to encourage them to apply to participate in the STEP program. Eligible homeowners were selected by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) based on data gathered from storm survivors who registered with FEMA.

Once a homeowner completes the Right of Entry form, an inspector will visit the home to assess the damage. For homes confirmed eligible for STEP, the inspector will develop a repair plan. Depending on the level of damage, the repairs will be made by either a volunteer disaster relief group (NC Baptists on Mission or United Methodist Committee on Relief) or a professional contractor managed by the state.

To date, more than 100 homes have been repaired or are under repair through the STEP program, and work is ready to begin on many more homes. As of Friday, more than 3,100 homeowners have returned their ROE forms to indicate they wish to participate in STEP.

Among the kinds of repairs made through the STEP program:

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Exterior repairs include secure and watertight doors, windows and roof, and safe entrances.

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The home's electrical and plumbing systems will be made safe and operational.

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Interior repairs include a functional kitchen – including a base cabinet under the sink, a surface to prepare food, basic refrigeration and cooking surfaces, a working sink – and a functional, private bathroom.

“Getting people back in safe, livable homes in their own communities is key to recovering from Hurricane Florence and the STEP program can help. If you've been notified that this may be a good fit for your family, apply now,” Gov. Cooper said.

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The cost of the STEP program is being shared by the State of North Carolina and FEMA. There is no cost to homeowners to participate in the voluntary STEP program.

For survivors who choose to participate in the STEP program, completion of STEP repairs will end their eligibility for a FEMA travel trailer or mobile home and for Transitional Sheltering Assistance to stay in a hotel.