



U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

DHS Statement on the Importance of Seeking Safety and Support Regardless of Immigration Status Following Recent Severe Weather in the South and Midwest

Release Date: December 21, 2021

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is working with its federal, state, local, and non-governmental partners to support the needs of the areas affected by the devastating severe weather and tornadoes in Kentucky and throughout the South and Midwest. DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Deanne Criswell traveled to Kentucky on Sunday, December 12, 2021, and Wednesday, December 15, 2021, to meet with local and commonwealth officials and survey the damaged areas.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) remind the public that sites that provide emergency response and relief are considered protected areas (<https://www.dhs.gov/publication/guidelines-enforcement-actions-or-near-protected-areas-memo>) for purposes of ICE and CBP enforcement actions. To the fullest extent possible, ICE and CBP do not conduct enforcement activities at protected areas such as along evacuation routes, sites used for sheltering or the distribution of emergency supplies, food or water, or registration sites for disaster-related assistance or the reunification of families and loved ones.

At the request of FEMA or local and state authorities, ICE and CBP may help conduct search and rescue, air traffic de-confliction, and other public safety missions. ICE and CBP provide emergency assistance to individuals regardless of their immigration status and are not also conducting immigration enforcement in these roles. DHS officials do not and will not pose as individuals providing emergency-related information as part of any immigration enforcement activities.

DHS encourages all eligible individuals to apply for and seek out assistance. Please go to <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/get-assistance/forms> (<https://www.disasterassistance.gov/get-assistance/forms>) for instructions on how to apply for FEMA disaster assistance.

DHS is aware that some disaster survivors may fear applying for FEMA assistance due to their immigration status. FEMA does not collect information regarding immigration status or that of any member of an applicant's household and does not proactively provide personal information to ICE or CBP for immigration enforcement. However, in rare circumstances, based on a specific request, ICE or CBP could request this information if a person poses a current threat to national security or public safety based upon an articulable risk of death, violence, or physical harm to any person. Please see, [FACT SHEET: Citizenship Status and Eligibility for Disaster Assistance FAQ | FEMA.gov](#) (<https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20210318/fact-sheet-citizenship-status-and-eligibility-disaster-assistance-faq#:~:text=You%20will%20be%20asked%20to%20sign%20a%20Declaration,no%20information%20regarding%20your%20status%20will%20be%20gathered>

If individuals believe that the emergency event may affect their U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) application, petition, or immigration status, they should contact USCIS or go

to <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations> (<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations>) for more information.

DHS is committed to ensuring that every individual who seeks shelter, aid, or other assistance as a result of the severe weather is able to do so regardless of their immigration status. DHS carries out its mission without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, national origin, or political associations, and in compliance with law and policy.

Keywords: [Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#) ([/keywords/cbp](#)), [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) ([/keywords/fema](#)), [FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell](#) ([/keywords/fema-administrator-deanne-criswell](#)), [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#) ([/keywords/ice](#)), [Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties \(CRCL\)](#) ([/keywords/crcl](#)), [Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas](#) ([/keywords/secretary-alejandro-mayorkas](#)), [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) ([/keywords/uscis](#)).

Last Published Date: December 21, 2021