

## Disaster Housing Task Force

# Newsletter

## Disaster Housing Progress Updates

Dear Task Force Members,

The Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) is pleased to introduce the first official newsletter for Delaware's Disaster Housing Task Force (DHTF)! The goal of this newsletter is to provide regular updates to the DHTF team on disaster housing-related activities, events, and Disaster Housing Strategy developments and progress.

### What's New

Since the release of Version 1 of the statewide Disaster Housing Strategy in spring 2025, DSHA has fulfilled its commitment to disaster housing readiness/planning across Delaware, in part through the launch of a disaster housing pilot program for municipalities. This pilot program is designed to operationalize scalable, community-based recovery solutions.

In partnership with the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA), DSHA has launched a technical assistance pilot program to support a cohort of three municipalities in Sussex County (Georgetown, Milton, and Lewes) adopt pre-disaster

actions to streamline their housing recovery process. At the end of the program, the municipalities will adopt a pre-disaster recovery ordinance tailored to the needs and priorities of their community.

### Looking Ahead

Continuing throughout 2026, DSHA will work to refine the Disaster Housing Strategy based on feedback and recommendations from the DHTF. This includes expanding the state's disaster housing resources, further refining the DHTF structure, and clarifying the communications flow among state agencies, local and county government, and community partners post-disaster.



## Your Feedback: Disaster Recovery Fund Language

DSHA and DEMA, in partnership with the Governor's office, have recently drafted a bill to establish a Disaster Recovery Fund. The fund would support the creation of state-level programs within DSHA and DEMA that achieve

recovery milestones post-disaster and are in accordance with our assigned responsibilities per the Delaware Emergency Operations Plan (DEOP), including housing recovery needs, equipment needed to assist in recovery, and emergency debris removal.

Many DHTF members have shared feedback on the draft bill via email, in a virtual meeting, and through an online survey. The survey asked DHTF members to share feedback on the draft bill language. It found significant support of the bill among DHTF members.

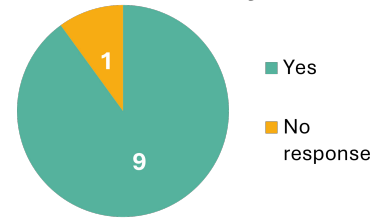
The majority of those who responded to the survey were comfortable with the bill as currently drafted, with a few suggesting slight changes. Some suggested improvement include:

- Strengthening language

around resilience and mitigation to build back better and reduce future risk

- Identifying a funding source
- Feedback for consideration during program and policy development, including eligibility and process.

**Do you support the development of a state Disaster Recovery Fund?**



## Progress on Disaster Housing Preparedness Actions

The Disaster Housing Strategy prioritizes ten pre-disaster capacity building actions at the state and local level that can help mitigate the impacts of disasters and enhance the state's ability to respond and recover swiftly. This newsletter provides the Disaster Housing Task Force with regular progress updates on the status of these actions, described in the pages below.



### Provide technical assistance to local and county governments

In partnership with the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA), DSHA has launched a technical assistance pilot program to support a cohort of three municipalities in Sussex County adopt pre-disaster actions to streamline their housing recovery process. At the end of the program, participating municipalities will adopt a pre-disaster recovery ordinance tailored to the needs and priorities of their community.



### Identify land use parameters and conduct analysis for the potential siting of temporary housing

The technical assistance pilot program kicked off with a series of workshops, one of which included a mapping exercise in which participants identified high-risk areas and potential interim housing locations or available parcels.



### Examine the potential to maintain a state fund for housing recovery

DSHA and DEMA have drafted legislation that proposes a Disaster Recovery Fund live in Title 20, Chapter 31 of Delaware Code. If this bill passes, it would establish a structured way to provide support to affected Delawareans if funds were to become available. Currently there are no appropriations attached to the proposed legislation.



### Coordinate damage assessment data processes and management across partners

DEMA is in the process of developing an online public Damage Reporting Tool (DRT). After a disaster, residents will be able to use the web-based survey and mapping tool to report property damage, immediate needs, and other life-safety needs for individuals.



## Resource Spotlight

DSHA has developed a [Disaster Housing Preparedness Guide](#) to highlight best practices in preparing to manage housing recovery after a disaster. Developed with local jurisdictions in mind, the guide provides a menu of disaster housing preparedness actions, from local capacity building to post-disaster permitting and community engagement.



### **Introduce the Disaster Housing Strategy to partners across the state**

Vanessa has taken several opportunities to speak on behalf of the DHTF and its work pertaining to the Strategy. This includes presenting at the 2025 and 2026 Delaware Resilient and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL) summits, multiple FEMA events, an American Planning Association (APA) Lunch & Learn, and two Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG) dinners, among others.



### **Provide training to state agencies, local jurisdictions, and volunteers**

DSHA and DEMA hosted a Disaster Housing Workshop in November of 2025 that brought together state agencies, county and local partners, and community-based organizations to test the state's disaster housing recovery operations. Additionally, Vanessa sits on the Housing Resources Committee for DSHA's Zoning & Land Use Reform Pilot Program, which was created via Senate Joint Resolution 8 to provide technical assistance to local governments. Vanessa's participation on the committee helps to identify overlaps between affordable housing initiatives, land use reforms, and disaster housing planning, and ensures a coordinated approach to both pilot programs. Vanessa is also part of the Delaware Environmental Institute's Salinization and Infrastructure working group, and is providing guidance for Senate Bill 237 implementation, which requires municipalities with populations greater than 2,000 to address community resiliency and the impacts of climate change in their comprehensive plans.



### **Examine potential to adopt a statewide building code**

A scheduled feasibility study on this topic was paused due to canceled federal funding. This is a recurring conversation topic at the state level that DEMA and DSHA will continue to monitor.



### **Assess capacity and prepare to manage and implement potential disaster funding**

Under consideration



### **Coordinate with local jurisdictions to implement tracking of disaster-related building permits**

Under consideration



### **Examine the potential to support mandated rental registration**

Under consideration

## **Stay Connected**

For more information or to get involved, please contact Vanessa Cullen, Emergency Management Coordinator at [vanessa.cullen@delaware.gov](mailto:vanessa.cullen@delaware.gov). For more information on DSHA, visit <https://www.destatehousing.com/>.

