



Emergency Evacuation Relief Payments

ISSUE

Inclusion of emergency evacuation relief payments as eligible means to provide immediate financial assistance for the necessities of life to individuals subjected to an evacuation order during a natural disaster.

OBJECTIVE

Clarification of Section 2.7 of the DFAA Guidelines in the context of emergency evacuation relief payments.

DEFINITIONS

Emergency evacuation relief payments: When a natural disaster strikes, the province or territory (province) may provide a lump-sum payment to individuals subjected to an evacuation order through mechanisms such as pre-loaded commercial credit cards, store vouchers, etc. Features of the ideal mechanism include: restrictions to certain types of purchases; comprehensive reporting on expenses; option to distribute electronically; and remote and automatic release of funds. The funds are to be used for procuring the necessities of life.

Immediate: Instantly, imminently.

Evacuation order: A situation where emergency management officials require individuals to leave at risk areas.

Necessities of life: The emergency evacuation relief payments are to be used for items that an evacuee must have in order to survive, for example food, water, essential clothing (depending on weather conditions), medical supplies, transportation and accommodations, etc.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Emergency evacuation relief payments are eligible for cost-sharing under the DFAA so long as they are:

- Used to ensure the necessities of life and are accessible to individuals subjected to an evacuation order;

- Not used for items that were insured or insurable (i.e. insurance coverage for a specific hazard was available in the area at a reasonable cost); and
- Used from the date the evacuation order is issued to the date it is rescinded (up to a maximum of two weeks).

DFAA GUIDELINE REFERENCES

2.7.7 Expenditures are only eligible if they are documented by invoices for goods or services in which the reason for their purchase is given and their applicability to response or recovery operations is clear.

2.7.9 Program Audit Unit (PAU) will audit the submitted provincial claim for federal DFAA compliance. The purpose of this audit is to either express an opinion, or present an assertion that an opinion cannot be expressed, as to the total eligible costs under the federal DFAA and as to the Province's compliance with the DFAA Guidelines. The audit work may encompass, but will not be limited to: inspection of records and documents and tangible assets; observation of processes and procedures; enquiry of knowledgeable persons; third party confirmations; recalculation to confirm the mathematical accuracy of records; re-performance of procedures or controls; and analytical procedures to study plausible relationships among both financial and non-financial data. The audit procedures may also encompass a request and review of provincial audit working papers (as per 2.7.8). Public Safety Canada uses the federal audit report when making a final determination of eligibility and amount of financial assistance as determined by the cost-sharing formula. Public Safety Canada makes final decisions as to the compliance and eligibility of claimed costs.

INTERPRETATION:

When an evacuation order is given due to a natural disaster, individuals need to leave their homes urgently and often do not have enough time to pack the necessities of life such as food, water, essential clothing (depending on weather conditions), medical supplies, or to plan for transportation and accommodations. In these instances, provinces may provide a lump-sum payment to evacuees to ensure the evacuees can procure the necessities of life for the duration of the evacuation order (up to a maximum of two weeks). The intent of the emergency evacuation relief payment is to ensure the province can deliver the necessary funds to evacuees without causing an undue administrative burden.

In order for the province's emergency evacuation relief payment expenses to be eligible for cost-sharing under the DFAA, the province will need to provide records in line with section 2.7 of the Guidelines at the time of final audit. Records should include:

- Methodology for determining the mechanism used to distribute emergency evacuation relief payments;
- Methodology for determining the dollar amount allotted per evacuee;

- Where possible, feasible, list of the controls/safeguards put in place to ensure that the emergency evacuation relief payments are used for the necessities of life;
- Proof of an evacuation order (date issued; date rescinded);
- Process for validating that the evacuees receiving emergency evacuation relief payments are in fact individuals impacted by the evacuation order;
- List of evacuees in receipt of emergency evacuation relief payments; and
- An expense/reconciliation report of the emergency evacuation relief payments (e.g. a single roll-up statement), etc.

PROCESS

Province will:

- Identify an appropriate emergency evacuation relief payment mechanism;
- Maintain and provide all relevant records for the federal auditors; and
- Seek advice from Public Safety Canada (via the Regional Office) on eligibility determinations and any other DFAA related inquiries.

Public Safety Canada will:

- Review documentation, if requested by the province, and provide advice;
- Review records and determine eligibility during the final audit; and
- Issue final payment and close file.