SCEMD
Office of the Adjutant General
State Emergency Operations Center
2779 Fish Hatchery Road, West Columbia, SC 29172
State Joint Information Center: 803-737-8500

VOLUNTARY PROPERTY ACQUISITION

SCEMD'S HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

- This is a long-term program, not an immediate-relief solution.
- All acquisitions are voluntary – no one is forced to relinquish his or her home.
- Homeowners do not apply to SCEMD for an acquisition. Acquisitions are not part of the FEMA disaster application process and are not part of individual disaster assistance.
- The state administers the program if local governments wish to begin voluntary property acquisition to mitigate future hazards.
- As part of SCEMD's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), local governments can use FEMA funding to acquire eligible properties.
- The state accepts project applications from local governments, including the acquisition of single homes or groups of homes.
- The state and local communities work together to identify areas where acquisitions make the most sense. Individuals may not apply directly to the state, but the community may apply on their behalf.
- If the application is approved by FEMA, the homes can be purchased for up to pre-disaster fair market value or the community may choose to use the assessed value.
- The FEMA HMGP will fund up to 75% of the total project cost. The other 25% is funded by non-federal sources.

These are the steps taken in an acquisition process under the HMGP:

1. An application for assistance is prepared by local officials with input from the community and homeowners. The local officials will have been previously informed by the state of what the state's priorities are for Hazard Mitigation. Grant Funding and other special restrictions decided upon by state officials.

2. The state receives, reviews and prioritizes the applications and submits those deemed eligible to FEMA for approval. FEMA reviews the applications to ensure they meet the program requirements, are environmentally sound and are a cost-effective use of federal funds.

3. Once FEMA gives its approval, the state begins the acquisition process. The communities conduct the purchase and title transfer.

4. The buildings are removed or demolished by the community, and the land is cleared.

- The property title is deed-restricted, and the land must remain forever as public open green space. The community can use it to create public parks, wildlife refuges, etc., but it cannot sell it to private individuals nor develop it.
- An acquisition is not a simple matter and does not happen overnight. It may take months for the affected communities to agree to and submit acquisition proposals. Once a homeowner accepts an offer the average closing takes about 45 days.
- Generally homeowners and businesses involved in an acquisition are located in Special Flood Hazard Areas or areas that have experienced repeated flooding.
- South Carolinians with questions about the acquisition process should call their local emergency management office, local floodplain administrator, local zoning administrator or SCEMD Public Information.