



FEMA

Disaster News

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TOLL-FREE APPLICATION NUMBER AVAILABLE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY FLOODING IN MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON, Mass. – A toll-free application telephone number is now operational for those who suffered property damage or loss in declared counties in the Commonwealth from the severe storms and flooding beginning on May 12, 2006 and continuing.

Libby Turner, Federal Coordinating Officer, U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Cristine McCombs, Director, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), said those affected by the disaster may apply for assistance immediately by calling this toll-free number, 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST, seven days a week, until further notice. The toll-free number will be staffed and operational over the upcoming holiday weekend. Those with speech and hearing impairment may call TTY 1-800-462-7585. You may also register on-line at www.fema.gov.

In response to a request from Governor Romney for federal assistance to help meet the recovery needs of the affected residents and business owners, President Bush signed a major disaster declaration for Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk Counties.

The declaration makes residents of the three counties eligible for a wide range of programs such as funding for temporary disaster housing assistance, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest loans for individuals and businesses to repair or replace damaged property, grants for serious disaster-related needs, and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs, and disaster unemployment assistance.

When calling or registering online have the following information available:

- Your current phone number;
- Your address at the time of the disaster and the address where you are now staying;
- Your Social Security number, if available;
- A general list of damages and losses you suffered;
- If insured, the name of your company or agent and your policy number;
- General financial information; and
- Bank account coding if you wish to speed up receiving your assistance with direct deposit

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“Don’t prejudge your eligibility, even if you don’t have all of the information necessary or it was lost in the flood. It’s important that all residents get the assistance they need,” McCombs said. “Even if you have already registered with the Red Cross, Salvation Army or another voluntary agency or have reported damage to county or local officials, you can only apply for assistance programs under the disaster declaration by calling FEMA’s toll-free number or registering online.”

FEMA disaster assistance covers basic needs only and will not normally compensate you for your entire loss.

If you have insurance, the government may help pay for basic needs not covered under your insurance policy. Residents should contact their insurance agent first, and then they should call FEMA to apply. Some disaster aid does not have to be paid back, while other forms of help may come in the form of loans. The FEMA representative will explain the details to you when you call.

FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made.

Editors: For more information visit www.fema.gov or www.mass.gov/mema.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INFORMATION

When disaster strikes, the Federal Emergency Management Agency administers a number of disaster assistance programs and coordinates the efforts of many other federal agencies that provide services to help people through the recovery process. The types of assistance that are available include:

Federal Emergency Management Agency Programs

INDIVIDUALS and HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAM: Housing assistance to individuals and families whose permanent homes were damaged or destroyed by the flood. Types of aid include grants for temporary rental housing; essential repairs needed to make a residence safe, secure and sanitary; and to help meet serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other programs, such as medical, dental, funeral, personal property, transportation, moving and storage. Funds are also available for mitigation measures to help reduce future disaster damages.

DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE: Weekly benefits to those individuals out of work due to the disaster, including self-employed persons, farm owners and others not usually covered under regular unemployment insurance.

TOLL-FREE APPLICATION NUMBER 3-3-3

U.S. Small Business Administration Programs

HOME/PERSONAL PROPERTY DISASTER LOANS: Disaster loans to homeowners and renters for restoring or replacing underinsured or uninsured disaster-damaged real and personal property. (Available in declared counties.)

BUSINESS DISASTER LOANS: Disaster loans to repair or replace destroyed or damaged business facilities, inventory, machinery, equipment, etc. not covered by insurance. (Available to large and small businesses in declared counties.) Loans also may be available only to small businesses for working capital to assist them during the disaster recovery period.