



DISASTER NEWS



MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY -- FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DISASTER CRISIS COUNSELING AVAILABLE IN SIX MISSISSIPPI COUNTIES

JACKSON, Miss. December 31, 2001 – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved a Crisis Counseling Immediate Services grant application by the State of Mississippi to pay for 60 days of free counseling services in six Mississippi counties. The program is aimed at assisting those who had their lives thrown into disarray and confusion by the tornadoes, flooding and severe storms that began November 24.

The six counties participating in the program are: Bolivar, DeSoto, Madison, Panola, Quitman and Washington.

“Disaster stress is a normal reaction when people are uprooted; suffer the loss of precious personal possessions; and are traumatized by the ferocity of severe weather,” said Leon Shaifer, the state official in charge of disaster recovery. “Counseling enables them to regain control of their lives.”

Children and the elderly are special concerns following a major disaster. Counselors visit schools, neighborhood meetings, shopping centers, and faith communities to listen and help those in need.

“FEMA recognizes that disasters cause emotional and psychological trauma as well as the physical devastation seen by the eye,” said Gracia Szczech of FEMA, the official in charge of federal recovery operations. “We fund crisis counseling to help people recover in all aspects from the harmful effects of a disaster.”

For counseling assistance call the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Helpline at **1-877-210-8513**, or contact your local county department of mental health.

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