



DISASTER NEWS



MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY -- FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTIES ADDED TO DISASTER DECLARATION CAN GET FEDERAL AND STATE ASSISTANCE IF AFFECTED BY STORMS AND FLOODING

JACKSON, Miss. December 28, 2001 -- Renters, homeowners and business owners who sustained losses as a result of the recent tornadoes, flooding and severe storms may find help through a variety of state and federal programs, according to state and federal disaster recovery officials. At the request of Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, 10 Mississippi counties were declared a major disaster area by President Bush on December 7, making them eligible for state and federal disaster assistance. Grenada, Lafayette, Leake, Scott and Tunica counties were added to the list of eligible counties on December 20th.

The counties now designated eligible for state and federal disaster assistance to individuals are: Bolivar, DeSoto, Grenada, Hinds, Humphreys, Lafayette, Leake, Madison, Panola, Quitman, Scott, Sunflower, Tate, Tunica and Washington.

"We are doing everything within our power to make sure services are provided to those who need them," said Leon Shaifer, the state official in charge of the disaster recovery effort. "A number of state/federal disaster assistance programs are in place to help the people of Mississippi recovery from this disaster."

The primary aid programs include temporary disaster housing assistance, low-interest loans for repair and replacement of real or personal property and grants to help meet serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs. Disaster unemployment benefits are available to those who are unemployed as a result of the disaster and who do not otherwise qualify for unemployment compensation.

Gracia Szczech, the federal official in charge of disaster recovery, said, "Residents and business owners located within the designated counties are eligible to apply for assistance and are urged to call the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) toll-free registration line at **1-800-621-3362**. The registration line for persons who are hearing or speech impaired is TTY **1-800-462-7585**."

Programs available to eligible applicants may include:

Disaster Housing Assistance, administered by FEMA, for individuals and families whose homes were destroyed or made unlivable as a result of the recent tornadoes, flooding and severe storms. The program provides funding for temporary accommodations or minimal home repairs to make a property safe, secure and habitable.

Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration to homeowners, renters or business owners for the repair, replacement or rebuilding of disaster-damaged property.

Grants through the Individual and Family Grant program are available to those who have serious immediate needs resulting from the disaster that cannot be met by other sources.

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