



Disaster News

March 2, 2005

FEMA-1580-DR-OH-PR016

Contact:

FEMA Russ Edmonston 614-890-8254

Ohio EMA Julie Hinds 614-799-3695

SBA Colleen Hiam 716-282-4612

FEMA AID SEPARATE FROM OTHER FEDERAL BENEFITS

COLUMBUS, OH -- Ohioans affected by recent winter storms and flooding who are receiving Social Security, disability or other federal benefits should not hesitate to apply for disaster assistance as well.

Disaster assistance made available by presidential declaration on February 15 is entirely separate from other government programs and tax-free. Although this is the case, some senior citizens and other federal program beneficiaries affected by the storms and flooding that occurred between December 22, 2004 and February 1, 2005 may feel they are ineligible for disaster aid.

“Don’t hesitate to apply for the assistance you may need,” said Lee Champagne, coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). “FEMA assistance funds are provided in addition to any other benefits that eligible homeowners, renters or business people may be receiving.”

Another concern often expressed in disaster-stricken communities is, “My neighbor needs help more than I do.” Maybe so, but that shouldn’t keep anyone from applying to get any help for which they might qualify.

“There is enough financial assistance for all who are eligible,” said Ohio EMA Executive Director Nancy Dragani, state coordinating officer in the disaster recovery effort. “Help distributed to individuals will not affect what disaster assistance is available to their neighbors or other residents of the state.”

FEMA disaster aid covers basic needs only. It will not normally compensate for an entire loss. Some disaster aid does not have to be paid back, while other types of help may come in the form of low-interest loans. People in the disaster-affected areas should register with FEMA toll-free at **1-800-621-3362** or **TTY 1-800-462-7585**. People may also register online at www.fema.gov.

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency coordinates the state's response and recovery from the State of Ohio Emergency Operations Center. One of the primary focuses of the agency is to

- more -

PAGE TWO – Federal Aid Separate from Other Federal Benefits

ensure that Ohio citizens are prepared to respond to and recover from an emergency or disaster and to lead mitigation efforts against the effects of future disasters. During times of disaster, Ohio EMA coordinates activities of responding state agencies and maintains liaison with similar agencies of other states and of the federal government.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

###