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# Disaster News

## **NINE ADDITIONAL COUNTIES NOW ELIGIBLE FOR INDIVIDUAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**COLUMBUS, OH** — Disaster assistance has been expanded in nine counties to include aid for homeowners, renters and business owners affected by the recent winter storms and flooding in Ohio, federal and state recovery officials announced today.

With this amendment to the presidential disaster declaration of February 15, 2005, the total number of Ohio counties now eligible for federal and state individual assistance comes to 27 with the addition of the following counties: Darke, Fairfield, Guernsey, Hocking, Holmes, Licking, Richland, Stark and Tuscarawas.

Lee Champagne, federal coordinating officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Nancy Dragani, state coordinating officer and executive director of Ohio Emergency Management Agency, said assistance to the additional areas was approved based on a review of damage data gathered by federal and state disaster recovery officials.

“We remain committed to ensuring that every qualified individual, family and business receives the help they need to recover from the severe storms and flooding that occurred between December 22, 2004 and February 1, 2005,” Champagne said.

Affected residents and business owners in any declared county may apply for assistance immediately by calling the toll-free application number, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. Phone lines will be open between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday until further notice. Those with speech or hearing impairment may call TTY **1-800-462-7585**. People may also register online at **www.fema.gov**. Those who have already called to register need not do so again.

Champagne said calling these numbers is the only way to apply for a wide range of state and federal disaster assistance programs. Those programs can provide funding for temporary disaster housing assistance, U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest loans for individuals and business owners to repair or replace real or personal property, replacement grants to help meet serious un-covered, disaster-related needs; and, disaster unemployment assistance.

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Callers are advised to have the following information available to help speed up the application process:

- Your current phone number;
- Your Social Security number, if available;
- A general list of damages and losses you suffered;
- If insured, your insurance policy number, or the agent's and company name;
- General financial information; and
- Bank account code if you wish to speed up your assistance with direct deposit.

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, then if they have unmet needs 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.

Disaster-designated counties are: Athens, Belmont, Clark, Coshocton, Crawford, Darke, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Guernsey, Henry, Hocking, Holmes, Jefferson, Licking, Logan, Morgan, Muskingum, Pickaway, Pike, Richland, Ross, Scioto, Stark, Tuscarawas, Warren and Washington.

### **DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INFORMATION**

When disaster strikes, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 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 follow.

#### **Federal Emergency Management Agency Programs**

**INDIVIDUALS and HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAM:** Housing assistance to individuals and families whose permanent homes were damaged or destroyed by the recent severe storms and flooding that occurred between December 22 and February 1. Types of aid include grants for temporary rental housing; essential repairs needed to make a residence safe, sanitary and functional; and, to meet serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other programs, such as medical, dental, funeral, personal property, transportation and other FEMA-approved expenses.

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

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**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 to small businesses for working capital to assist them during the disaster recovery period. (Available in declared and contiguous counties.)

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The Ohio EMA 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 ensure that Ohio citizens are prepared for all hazards with the capability to respond to and recover from an emergency or disaster and to lead mitigation efforts against the effects of future disasters.

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.

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