



Disaster News

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DISASTER OFFICIALS OFFER TIPS TO ASSIST IN RECOVERY PROCESS

Calling to register...the most important step!

COLUMBUS, OH — Disaster recovery officials overseeing efforts to assist those dealing with the aftermath of the severe storms and flooding that occurred between December 22, 2004 and February 1, 2005 suggest a course of action for individuals and business owners who suffered damage or loss.

- **Call to register as soon as possible.** The application deadline is April 18, 2005. Homeowners, renters and business owners who suffered flood and severe storm losses must call the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) registration line at **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** to be considered for disaster assistance. Individuals with hearing or speech impairments should call **(TTY) 1-800-462-7585**. The lines are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, until further notice. You can also register online at www.fema.gov.
- **Call to register, even if you have already reported the damage to the county emergency manager, American Red Cross or other voluntary agencies.** You must call the FEMA application number to apply for federal disaster assistance.
- **Call to register, even if you are insured.** Check with your insurance agent to see if your coverage is adequate to reimburse your damage and loss. If not, or if you are not sure, register for assistance.
- **Remember, disaster assistance covers a range of disaster losses and comes in a variety of forms.** Disaster-related damage or loss of essential personal property, anything from a wheelchair to an essential appliance, may qualify for some form of federal/state assistance. Disaster assistance can come in the form of grants for immediate housing needs and emergency repairs, low-interest disaster loans to repair or replace disaster-related damages, or Disaster Unemployment Insurance for those affected by the disaster who are not covered by regular unemployment insurance.

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PAGE TWO – Tips for Assistance

- **Return all forms promptly.** After applying, you may receive a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest disaster loan application package in the mail. Fill out and return these forms promptly since they are an essential part of the disaster-assistance process. Failure to complete and return the application could eliminate you from getting other forms of assistance, including grants.
- **Stay in touch and keep appointments after you have applied for disaster assistance.** A FEMA inspector and/or an SBA loss verifier may make an appointment to visit your home. Make every effort to be at home for the appointment. You can call the FEMA Helpline using the same toll-free numbers, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**, (TTY) **1-800-462-7585**, if you have any questions on the status of your application or wish to provide updated information, like your current phone number.
- **Be mindful of assistance conditions to purchase or maintain flood insurance if you live in the floodplain.** Disaster victims who received housing assistance grants or loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration – and live in a Special Flood Hazard Area – must maintain flood insurance in order to receive disaster assistance in the future (except for rental assistance). For those residents involved in an earlier flooding incident who allowed their mandated flood insurance to lapse, some forms of state and federal assistance will not be available in this disaster.
- **Rebuild with disaster prevention in mind.** If you receive an emergency housing repair grant from FEMA, a follow-up letter will arrive after you receive your check. That letter will identify the purpose of the grant and will highlight the need to make repairs that will lessen the risk of future losses. Examples include raising electrical junction boxes and elevating major appliances to minimize floodwater damage.

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 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 disasters, 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.

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