



# Disaster News

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Contact:

**News Desk** **216-520-2525**

Ohio EMA C.J. Couch 614-582-9801

FEMA Gene Romano 703-399-0957

SBA Michael Lampton 404-347-3771

## **NEARLY \$1 MILLION ISSUED IN ASSISTANCE DURING FIRST WEEK OF DISASTER DECLARATION**

**CLEVELAND** – Just one week after President Bush issued a major disaster declaration in three northeastern Ohio counties, nearly \$1 million in assistance grants have been issued, either by check or direct deposit, federal and state recovery officials announced today.

There are two easy ways to begin the application process. You may call the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) toll-free numbers, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **TTY 1-800-462-7585** for the hearing or speech impaired. Both numbers are available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week until further notice, and multilingual operators are also available to answer your call. Residents with Internet access also may register online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) where valuable recovery information is also available.

"We're committed to providing disaster assistance as quickly as possible, and this assistance is an important first step in the recovery process," Jesse Munoz, FEMA's federal coordinating officer, said. "This may just be the first type of assistance that individual may be eligible to receive."

To date, 3,269 individuals and business owners from Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake counties who suffered damage or loss in the severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding that began July 27 have applied for assistance. Approximately 500 applications have been processed and \$959,121 in assistance grants have been disbursed.

"This early in the recovery process our concern is for people's housing needs," Nancy Dragani, Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) state coordinating officer, said. "Our top priority is getting people into safe, sanitary, and functional housing so they can continue on with their lives."

Disaster housing assistance comes in the form of grants for temporary housing needs and for homeowners to make essential repairs. This assistance serves as an interim solution to people's housing needs until long-term solutions are addressed, typically through insurance or low-interest disaster loans.

Other Needs Assistance provides for uninsured or under-insured disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs, which may include grants for medical, dental, personal property, transportation and other expenses that FEMA approves.

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*FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.*

*The Ohio EMA coordinates state assistance and resources during an emergency and prepares the state for all hazards through planning, training, exercises and funding activities at the state and local levels. This includes providing eligible assistance to individuals and governmental entities recovering from disaster-related damage and costs.*

*County EMA directors must plan, train, and exercise for any possible emergency/disaster, natural or man-made, that may impact the county, with the express intent of saving lives and protecting property. Working with county commissioners, the county EMA directors initiate the issuance of a disaster declaration and, when needed, coordinate response and recovery efforts with the Ohio EMA and FEMA. After the disaster is over, the county EMA director works closely with local, state, and federal officials to identify and implement mitigation efforts, which may limit the occurrence of future disasters.*