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Recovery Times



A Lake County parking area turned into a swimming pool — for cars. Ohio EMA photo/Vikki Bunting.

Disaster Help Available Now!

Severe storms, straight line winds and flooding from July 27 to August 4 caused devastation to Ashtabula, Geauga, and Lake counties. In response to a request from the governor, President Bush declared a federal disaster, opening the way for help to individuals and businesses in the affected counties who suffered disaster related damage. (See page 3 for a list of disaster-declared counties.)

The disaster declaration enables the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal agencies to team with state and local disaster workers to help residents and business owners in the affected counties recover.

Government disaster assistance covers basic needs but will not normally compensate disaster victims for their entire loss. If you have insurance, the government may help pay for basic needs not covered under your insurance policy. The types of help available are outlined in this newsletter and will be explained when you register for aid.

Those affected by the storms who live or own businesses in one of the disaster-declared counties may apply for aid by calling: **800-621-FEMA (800-621-3362)**. Those with speech or hearing impairments should call 800-462-7585. Or, you may register online at www.fema.gov.

Important Recovery Information

❖ **Register by phone or online at www.fema.gov**
Residents of declared counties whose homes, businesses or personal property sustained damage as a result of severe storms, straight line winds and flooding from July 27 to August 4, are urged to begin the application process. Register online or call **800-621-FEMA (3362)** (TTY: 800-462-7585) from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily until further notice.

❖ **Assistance to Individuals and Households**
Homeowners and renters whose primary residences are not livable may be eligible for funds to pay for temporary housing, repairs to make the home livable and other serious, disaster-caused needs including uncovered medical or transportation expenses.

❖ **U.S. Small Business Administration**
During disasters, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) provides low-interest, long-term loans to home-owners, renters and businesses of all sizes that are not fully insured.

❖ **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**
Disaster victims insured with NFIP are eligible to file claims to repair or replace damaged property. Call your licensed insurance agent for information.

Apply by Phone
800.621.FEMA (3362)
TTY: 800.462.7585

8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily
until further notice

How to File a Flood Insurance Claim

If you have flood insurance, call your insurance agent to report your claim. The agent will prepare a Notice of Loss form and an adjuster will be assigned to help you.

If possible, photograph the outside and the inside of the damaged property, showing the flooding and damage.

Dispose of damaged property that presents a health hazard or that may hamper clean-up operations. Be sure to describe fully all discarded items so that when the adjuster examines your losses and your records, these articles are included.

Compile a room-by-room inventory of missing or damaged goods and include manufacturers' names, dates and places of purchase and prices, where possible. Try to locate receipts and proofs of purchase, especially for large appliances. Good records can speed settlement of your claim.

Dealing with Mold and Mildew

A major health concern after flooding is the growth of molds and bacteria.

If your home has been water damaged, inspect and clean all appliances that have been in contact with floodwaters. Look for mold growth throughout the house, including the attic, basement and crawlspaces. Have professionals check heating/cooling ducts and wall insulation for mold growth.

Wash all items that came in contact with floodwaters with a household chlorine bleach solution of 4 oz. of bleach to 1 gal. water. Leave the bleach solution on the item for at least 15 min. before rinsing off with clean water.

When using a bleach solution, open windows and wear rubber gloves.

Questions? Call your local health department.

Q&A:

Disaster Assistance

Q. What should I do to get help with my disaster losses?

A. Call the toll-free registration number, 800-621-FEMA (3362). If you have a speech or hearing impairment, call the TTY number, 800-462-7585. Or you can register online at www.fema.gov.

Q. If I have insurance, can I still get assistance?

A. If you have any insurance coverage, contact your insurance company. However, if you believe you have needs not covered by your insurance, do not delay in applying for disaster assistance.

Q. What information do I need to give when I call for assistance?

A. Your name, address of damaged property, Social Security number, insurance information, gross income, and a phone number where you may be reached.

Q. What happens after I apply?

A. It depends on what source of aid is needed. That will determine where you are referred. If you are referred for disaster housing assistance, a trained FEMA inspector will call for an appointment within two weeks after you have registered. If you have not heard from anyone by then, call FEMA at 800-621-FEMA (3362).

Q. I registered with FEMA and then I received a disaster loan application from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Why did I receive a loan application?

A. SBA is the main source of federal recovery aid for disaster victims. For disaster damage to private property owned by individuals, families and businesses that is not fully covered by insurance, the basic form of federal assistance for long-term recovery is a low-interest disaster loan from SBA.

Q. What happens if I cannot afford a loan?

A. Even if you believe you cannot afford a loan, you should submit your low-interest loan application to SBA. If SBA determines you are unable to repay a loan, it may refer you to other programs for assistance.

Questions about FEMA assistance?

Call: 800.621.FEMA (3362)
TTY: 800.462.7585

Aid to Help You

on the Road to Recovery

Individuals and business owners in the declared counties of Ashtabula, Geauga, and Lake who suffered losses because of severe storms, straight line winds and flooding from July 27 to August 4 may be eligible for assistance.

ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND HOMEOWNERS

Help is available for renters and homeowners whose primary homes were damaged or destroyed or who face displacement from their homes because of disaster damage. Aid can include grants for temporary housing or money for emergency repairs to make a home livable. Help is also available to meet disaster-related serious needs or necessary expenses including medical, dental or transportation costs.

HOME/PERSONAL PROPERTY DISASTER LOANS

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners for real estate repairs. Renters and homeowners may borrow up to \$40,000 to replace personal property losses.

BUSINESS DISASTER LOANS

Businesses of all sizes and certain nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$1.5 million from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to pay for repairing or replacing real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other assets. For small businesses, SBA makes economic injury loans (EIDL) available for working capital. Eligible businesses can be in the adjoining, as well as declared counties, for EIDL only.

CONSUMER SERVICES

Complaints about business practices and other consumer problems should be filed with the state attorney general's office. Call 800-282-0515.

If you're insured, should you apply for assistance?

If you suffered damage from the severe storms, straight line winds and flooding that occurred July 27 to August 4 and you live or own a business in one of the disaster-declared counties, you may be eligible for federal disaster assistance **even if you were insured.**

The law does not allow disaster aid to duplicate insurance benefits; however, if your insurance does not cover all your costs or damage, FEMA may be able to help.

Register for aid by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or online at www.fema.gov

DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Weekly benefits may be provided for those out of work because of the disaster, including self-employed persons, farm/ranch owners and others not covered by regular unemployment. Apply at your local unemployment office.

AGRICULTURAL AID

Emergency loans may be available to farmers or ranchers for actual losses to essential property and/or production capacity. Cost-sharing grants also are available for emergency conservation measures. Contact your local Farm Service Agency office.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Help to speed delivery of checks delayed by the disaster is available from your local Social Security office.

TAX ASSISTANCE

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows federal income tax deductions for underinsured or uninsured losses on homes, personal property and household goods.

FRAUD PROTECTION AND LEGAL SERVICES

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) can assist in cases of unlawful discrimination in federally subsidized or insured housing. Complaints may be filed with the state Office of the Attorney General. Legal assistance and/or referrals may be available by calling the state bar association, 800-282-6556.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

The state insurance bureau can help with matters such as speeding up settlements, getting copies of lost policies, verifying losses and filing claims.

VETERANS BENEFITS

Information is available about benefits, pensions, insurance and VA mortgage loans.

VOLUNTEER AGENCY SERVICES

Volunteer relief agencies such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and other groups offer a wide range of services from supplying disaster victims with home clean-up kits to financial assistance to meet emergency disaster needs.



Members of a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) team talk to a Lake County homeowner. FEMA photo/Gene Romano

A Good Time to Think About Flood Insurance

Maintaining a flood insurance policy is one of the best ways to protect yourself against the cost of flood damage. As many residents found out in the aftermath of the recent flooding, homeowners policies do not cover damage from rising waters. But, if you do not have flood insurance, you can take steps now to protect yourself against future flood losses.

Flood insurance backed by the federal government is available to any homeowner, renter or business owner whose property is in a community that participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). To participate, the community must adopt and enforce local floodplain management ordinances designed to reduce the risk of future flood losses.

If you live in such a community, you can purchase flood insurance from any licensed insurance agent or company — the same one, for example, who handles your homeowners or automobile insurance.

Premiums vary according to the flood risk your property is exposed to, the amount of coverage you purchase, the deductible you select and the type of building you are insuring.

On a single-family home, you may purchase flood insurance coverage up to \$250,000 on the structure and up to \$100,000 on the contents. If you are a business owner, the maximum is \$500,000 on the building and another \$500,000 on contents. If you are a renter, you can purchase up to \$100,000 coverage for personal belongings.

Some people resist buying flood insurance in the faulty belief that if flooding occurs, the government will bail them out. Federal disaster assistance is available only if a flood (or other disaster) is so large and widespread it warrants a major disaster declaration from the president. Most disasters are not presidentially declared. In the majority of floods, victims are on their own — unless they have flood insurance. And even for floods that are declared major disasters, the aid available is limited. Most assistance is in the form of loans.

Even if your neighborhood is not in a floodplain, flood insurance is advisable. Floods can — and do — occur almost anywhere.

For more information, contact your local insurance agent or company or call the NFIP toll-free number, 888-275-6347.

Flood Insurance May Help Reduce Future Damage

If your home or business is substantially damaged by a flood, you may have to meet certain building requirements in your community to repair or rebuild.

Help in covering the costs of meeting those requirements may be provided in your flood insurance policy.

Flood insurance policyholders may be eligible to get up to \$30,000 to help pay the costs to bring their home or business into compliance with their community floodplain ordinance.

If your community officials determine that your home or business has been “substantially damaged” by the flood, contact your insurance company or agent to file a claim for help in meeting these costs.

For more information, call your insurance company or agent or the NFIP toll-free number, 888-275-6347.

Make sure disaster aid goes to those who deserve it.

**FEMA Fraud Hotline:
800-323-8603**

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status.

If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, contact FEMA at

800-621-FEMA (3362)
TTY: 800-462-7585

or contact the state equal rights office.

SBA Low-Interest Loans: Not Only for Business

A low-interest loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the main form of federal help for long-term recovery for homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes. These loans fund repairs of damages to private property not fully covered by insurance. By making affordable loans, the SBA disaster program helps disaster victims pay for repairs while keeping taxpayer costs reasonable.

Loans for homeowners and renters. SBA disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners for real estate repairs and up to \$40,000 for replacement of disaster-damaged personal property. Renters may borrow up to \$40,000 to replace disaster-damaged personal property.

An additional 20 percent may be added to the disaster loan to cover the costs of devices to prevent future damage.

SBA analyzes the income and debts of a homeowner or renter. If the applicant cannot afford a disaster loan, SBA may refer that person to another source of help.

Loans for businesses and nonprofit organizations. Businesses of all sizes and private nonprofit organizations may apply for low-interest disaster loans from SBA to repair or replace disaster-damaged real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. Loans of up to \$1.5 million are available for losses not fully covered by insurance.

For small businesses only, SBA makes Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) to provide working capital to pay necessary obligations until operations return to normal. These loans, up to \$1.5 million, are available to businesses financially impacted by the disaster, even if they had no property damage. Small businesses located in counties next to the declared counties also may apply for these loans.

When you register for assistance by calling the FEMA toll-free number, **800-621-FEMA (3362)**, you may receive an SBA loan application. If you need assistance in completing it, you can get help from an SBA representative at any disaster recovery center. Also visit SBA on the Web at www.sba.gov.

Out of Work Because of the Disaster?

The federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program may provide you with a weekly check if you have become unemployed or have suffered a loss of income as a result of the disaster. The program is designed to help the self-employed, farmers and others not normally eligible for unemployment insurance.

Disaster unemployment assistance can provide weekly benefits for up to 26 weeks following the date of the disaster declaration.

You may be eligible if you are:

- out of work as a result of the disaster;
- self-employed or a seasonal/migrant worker whose income is substantially affected by the disaster;
- an employee not covered by any other unemployment compensation; or
- a survivor who, as a result of the disaster, becomes a head of household.

Contact your local unemployment office for information.

Hiring a Contractor? Ask Questions First

Common sense is the watchword when hiring a contractor to repair or rebuild your storm-damaged home. To help the process go as smoothly as possible, follow these suggestions:

Check the contractor's reputation.

Contact the local Better Business Bureau, home builders association or building trades to ask if the contractor you are thinking of using has unanswered complaints filed against him or her.

Ask for references. Get the names of previous customers. Call some and ask if they would hire the contractor again.

Ask for proof of insurance. Be sure the contractor has disability and workers' compensation insurance.

Ask for a written estimate. Make sure it includes everything you expect the contractor to do.

Ask for a contract. The contract should clearly state all work, costs and the payment schedule. Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces.

Do not sign off before the job is finished. Do not sign completion papers or make the final payment until the work is completed.

Recovery Times

Recovery Times is published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency with help from other federal, state and voluntary agencies. Comments and inquiries may be directed to

PH: 800.621.FEMA (3362)
<http://www.fema.gov>
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Health Tips

As Cleanup Begins

BUILDING FOR A SAFER FUTURE

For Ohioans cleaning up after flooding, it is important to proceed with caution.

If you receive a puncture wound contaminated with sewage, soil or saliva during cleanup, see a physician to determine if a tetanus booster is necessary. The doctor will take into account your vaccine history, date of the last dose received and type of injury.

Mold is likely to be a problem in flooded homes and has the potential to affect the health of all family members.

Wet, porous materials, such as carpeting, wallboard, insulation, wallpaper and furniture, cannot be cleaned or dried and should be discarded because they can be a mold source.

If the humidity outside is lower than indoors and, if the weather permits, open doors and windows.

Use fans to move the air to dry your home. Do not use central air conditioning or the furnace blower if the ducts were under water. They will blow dirty air that might contain contaminants.

Use dehumidifiers and window air conditioners, especially in closed areas.

Open closets and cabinet doors to promote air circulation.

Use a contractor who specializes in drying flooded buildings.

Food that comes in contact with floodwater can pose a serious health risk. Throw away all food containers that are bulging, leaking or dented, even if a leak is not obvious because bacteria can pass through openings too small for liquids.

Also throw away home-canned goods if the tops have been exposed to flooding. Food in paper containers, cloth or cardboard packaging that has been exposed to the water should also be discarded, along with soft drinks and ketchup bottles using capped containers.

It is best to throw away any product if there is doubt about its safety. Eating food exposed to floodwaters may cause serious illness or death.

Following are some simple, inexpensive steps you can take to protect your property from future flood damage.

Raise the electrical box at least 12 inches above the base flood elevation or relocate the box to an upper floor. (Ask your local building official what the base flood elevation is for your area.)

Raise the water heater and heating system on a masonry base at least 12 inches above the base flood elevation or relocate them to an upper floor.

Anchor the fuel tank to the floor or wall to prevent it from overturning or floating away. Metal structural supports and fasteners must be non-corrosive. Wooden supports must be pressure treated.

Install a floating floor-drain plug at the lowest point of the lowest finished floor. When the floor drainpipe backs up, the float rises and plugs the drain.

Install a backflow valve to prevent sewer backup from coming into your home.

Business owners can also protect their property to reduce future disaster damages by installing a generator for emergency power, protect business records and inventory computer files, and prepare an emergency plan, and rebuild with flood and wind-resistant materials.

For disaster-related information visit FEMA on the Web @ www.fema.gov



Clip & Save

FEDERAL AGENCIES

FEMA Registration	800-621-FEMA (3362)
TTY for hearing/speech impaired.....	800-462-7585
FEMA Fraud Detection	800-323-8603
National Flood Insurance Program	800-638-6620
U.S. Small Business Administration	800-659-2955
Social Security Administration	800-772-1213
Internal Revenue Service	800-829-1040
TTY for hearing/speech impaired	800-829-4059
Housing and Urban Development Hotline	800-669-9777
Dept. of Veterans Affairs	800-827-1000

STATE AGENCIES

Dept. of Insurance	
Consumer Hotline.....	800-686-1526
Fraud Hotline.....	800-686-1527

Insurance Institute.....	614-228-1593
Attorney General's Consumer Hotline	800-382-5516
Dept. of Job & Family Services	614-466-6282
Disaster Unemployment Assistance	877-644-6562
Dept on Aging,	800-677-1116
Dept. of Health.....	Contact county health department
Dept. of Mental Health "24-Hour Crisis Counseling Hotline Numbers	
Ashtabula County.....	HOPE LINE 1-800-577-7849
Geauga County.....	COPE LINE 1-888-285-5665
	or, Locally 1-440-285-5665
Lake County.....	CRISIS HOTLINE 1-800-411-0103
	or, Locally
	EASTERN LAKE CO. 1-440-357-7300;
	WESTERN LAKE CO. 1-440-953-8255

VOLUNTEER AGENCIES

American Red Cross	866-GET-INFO
Salvation Army	317-937-7000