

NJ Office of Emergency Management

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FACT SHEET: DISASTER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROCESS – WINTER STORM EVENT DECEMBER 26-27, 2010

After a natural or man-made event that causes extensive damage, the NJ Office of Emergency Management coordinates with FEMA to implement the Public Assistance Grant Program and assist municipalities and counties in recovering costs incurred as a result of the event.

The funding process consists of the following steps:

Step 1: Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)

The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) is a joint assessment used to determine the magnitude and impact of an event's damage. A FEMA/State team visits the impacted area(s) to view the damage first-hand and assess the scope of damage and estimate repair costs. Joint preliminary damage assessments for the winter storm/snowstorm occurring December 26-27, 2010 were conducted January 7-14, 2011.

Step 2: Presidential Declaration

Following the PDA process, the Governor sends a request letter to the President, directed through the Regional Director of the appropriate FEMA region. New Jersey is part of FEMA Region II, headquartered in New York City. The President then makes the decision whether or not to declare a major disaster or emergency.

After a presidential declaration has been made, FEMA will designate the area eligible for assistance and announce the types of assistance available. FEMA provides supplemental assistance for State and local government recovery expenses, and the Federal share will always be at least 75 percent of the eligible costs.

On February 4, 2011, New Jersey received a Presidential Disaster Public Assistance Declaration to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm occurring during the period of December 26-27, 2010.

The following counties are eligible on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by this severe winter storm and snowstorm: Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, and Union.

The State is actively evaluating whether additional counties may be eligible for Public Assistance at a later date, if warranted by further joint State/FEMA damage assessments. The potential for additional counties to be included in DR 1954 will be reviewed on a case-by-case-basis, as per FEMA guidelines/criteria.

FEMA Web link for Major Disaster Declared February 4, 2011 (DR-1954)

<http://www.fema.gov/news/event.fema?id=13635>

Step 3 Applicants' Briefing by Grantee – State of NJ

The Applicants' Briefing is a meeting conducted by the State to inform prospective applicants of available assistance, eligibility requirements and the process for obtaining Federal assistance under the declared event. The meeting is held as soon as practicable following the President's declaration. Typically, applicants will prepare and submit their Requests for Public Assistance form during the briefing.

County Offices of Emergency Management, the media and other stakeholders will be notified of the Applicants' Briefing for Public Assistance, DR-1954, as soon as it is scheduled.

Step 4: Submission of Request for Public Assistance by Applicant

The Request for Public Assistance is FEMA's official application form that public and Private Nonprofit organizations use to apply for disaster assistance. It is a simple, short form with self-contained instructions. "The Request" (FEMA form 90-49) asks for general information which identifies the applicant, starts the grant process and opens the Case Management File, which contains general claim information as well as records of meetings, conversations, phone messages and any special issues or concerns that may affect funding. The Request must be submitted to the State Public Assistance Officer within 30 days of the date of designation of an area.

Step 5: Kick-off Meeting with Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC)

The first meeting between the applicant, the Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC – FEMA representative) and Applicant Liaison (a State representative) is called the Kickoff Meeting. A Kickoff Meeting is held with each applicant to assess the applicant's individual needs, discuss disaster related damage, and set forth a plan of action for repair of the applicant's facilities. The Liaison will provide State specific details on documentation and reporting requirements.

Step 6: Project Formulation and Cost Estimating

Project formulation is the process of documenting the damage to the facility, identifying the eligible scope of work and estimating the costs associated with that scope of work for each of the applicant's projects.

Project formulation allows applicants to administratively consolidate multiple work items into single projects in order to expedite approval and funding, and to facilitate project management. A project is a logical method of performing work required as a result of the declared event. More than one damage site may be included in a project.

Step 7: Project Review and Validation

The purpose of validation is to confirm the eligibility, compliance, accuracy, and reasonableness of small projects formulated by an applicant, and to ensure that the applicant receives the maximum amount of assistance available under the law.

Step 8: Obligation of Federal Funds and Disbursement to Subgrantees

FEMA and the State of NJ share responsibility for making Public Assistance Program funds available to the subgrantees. FEMA is responsible for approving projects and making the Federal share of the approved amount available to the State through a process called obligation.

Through obligation FEMA notifies the State that the federal funds are available but reside in a Federal account until the grantee is ready to award grants to the appropriate subgrantees. The State is responsible for providing the grantee portion of the non-federal share of the grant amount and for notifying the subgrantee that funds are available.

Step 9: Appeals and Closeout

The appeals process is the opportunity for applicants to request reconsideration of decisions regarding the provision of assistance. There are two levels of appeal. The first level appeal is to the Regional Director. The second level appeal is to the Assistant Director at FEMA Headquarters. The applicant must file an appeal with the Grantee within 60 days of receipt of a notice of the action that is being appealed. The applicant must provide documentation to support the appeal. This documentation should explain why the applicant believes the original determination is wrong and the amount of adjustment being requested.

The purpose of closeout is to certify that all recovery work has been completed, appeals have been resolved and all eligible costs have been reimbursed. Closeout is an important last step in the Public Assistance Program process.

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