



**FEMA**

# Disaster News

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## **TOLL-FREE APPLICATION NUMBER AVAILABLE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY RECENT FLOODING IN WISCONSIN**

*Only One Phone Call to Apply for Disaster Assistance*

**MADISON, WI** — A toll-free application telephone number is now operational for those who suffered property damage or loss in the declared counties affected by the severe storms and flooding beginning on May 19.

Ron Sherman, federal coordinating officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Diane Kleiboer, state coordinating officer, Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), said those affected by the disaster may apply for assistance immediately by calling this toll-free number, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week, until further notice. Those with speech or hearing impairment may call **TTY 1-800-462-7585**.

In response to a request from Governor Jim Doyle, President Bush signed a major disaster declaration designating the counties of Columbia, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Kenosha, Ozaukee and Winnebago eligible for federal aid to help meet the recovery needs of stricken residents and business owners.

The declaration makes residents of these counties eligible for a wide range of programs such as funding for temporary disaster housing assistance, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest disaster loans for individuals and business owners to repair or replace damaged property, replacement grants for serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs, and disaster unemployment assistance.

“Your phone call is your application for both state and federal assistance available under the disaster declaration. Telephone application has proven to be the simplest, quickest, most efficient and confidential way to apply,” Sherman said.

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## TOLL-FREE APPLICATION NUMBER, PAGE 2

When calling to apply have the following information available:

- Your current phone number;
- Your address at the time of the disaster and the address where you are now staying;
- Your Social Security number, if available;
- A general list of damages and losses you suffered;
- If insured, the name of your company or agent and your policy number;
- General financial information; and
- Bank account coding if you wish to speed up your assistance with direct deposit

“Don’t prejudice your eligibility, even if you don’t have all the information necessary or it was lost in the flooding. It’s important that all residents get the assistance available to them as quickly as possible,” Kleiboer said. “Even if you have already registered with the American Red Cross, Salvation Army or another voluntary agency or have reported damage to county or local officials, you can apply for the federal and state assistance programs only by calling FEMA’s toll-free number.”

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.

In the counties of Clark, Columbia, Crawford, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Grant, Green Lake, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Vernon and Winnebago, the Presidential disaster declaration provides federal and state funding for affected local governments to pay eligible costs for repairing or replacing damaged public facilities, such as roads, buildings and utilities. Under the Public Assistance Program, local communities with eligible damage costs can receive grants that are 75% funded by FEMA and 12.5% funded by the State of Wisconsin with the remaining costs the applicant’s share. Federal funds are also available for cost sharing of expenses for approved projects that can reduce future disaster risk.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages Citizen Corps, the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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**DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INFORMATION**

When disaster strikes, the Federal Emergency Management Agency 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 include:

**Federal Emergency Management Agency Programs**

**INDIVIDUALS and HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAM:** Housing assistance to individuals and families whose permanent homes were damaged or destroyed by the severe storms and flooding beginning May 19. Types of aid include grants for temporary rental housing; for 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 those individuals out of work due to the disaster, including self-employed persons, farm owners and others not usually covered under regular unemployment insurance.

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