



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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## GOVERNOR RECEIVES PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION FOR ATLANTIC AND CAPE MAY COUNTIES; REQUESTS AID FOR MONMOUTH AND OCEAN COUNTIES

Gov. Christie Whitman was notified today by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials that in response to her request of February 18, New Jersey has received a presidential declaration of major disaster to aid communities in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. These counties were battered by the severe Northeaster from February 4 to 8. The declaration will make federal disaster aid available for residents and businesses in those communities hit hardest by the storm.

"I am gratified that the federal government has granted our request for disaster assistance," Gov. Whitman said. "Many New Jersey communities were hard hit by the storm, with severe flooding and beach erosion and damage to property. This disaster declaration will enable residents and their communities to obtain the assistance they need to recover from the storm and rebuild their homes and their communities."

While today's presidential declaration applies only to Atlantic and Cape May counties, Gov. Whitman said the state will amend its request for disaster assistance to also include Monmouth and Ocean counties which were also battered by the February 4-8 storm. Damages in Monmouth and Ocean were still being assessed when the Governor requested presidential disaster assistance on February 18.

As a result of the disaster declaration, residents of Atlantic and Cape May Counties will be eligible for low-interest loans from the U. S. Small Business Administration, as well as other types of assistance to address disaster-related needs not fully covered by insurance.

The declaration also will make federal funds available to state and local governments to help offset the cost of debris removal and emergency services related to the disaster.

The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, in conjunction with FEMA, has estimated public and private damages in Atlantic and Cape May counties that are eligible for FEMA assistance to be more than \$5 million. Additionally, preliminary estimates indicate that more than \$2.3 million damages may qualify for assistance from the Small Business Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.

Over the next several weeks, officials from FEMA will work with state representatives to begin a public outreach process.

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