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NEWS RELEASE

Gov. Whitman Orders State Assistance for Flood Victims

Gov. Christie Whitman today announced that she is sending teams from the Departments of Community Affairs, Human Services, and Health and Senior Services and Banking and Insurance to assist flood victims in Bergen, Passaic, and Somerset Counties.

"We want to be able to assist in whatever way possible. Having staff on-site to help with housing, to support local officials in assessing damage and building safety, and even to provide translators or mental health services will be important to flood victims in these first few critical days," said Gov. Whitman.

The Governor said the state is assessing the extent of the damages to determine whether the area is eligible for federal disaster funds.

The Department of Health and Senior Services has already contacted local health departments, hospitals and nursing homes to offer assistance. The department will also use its NJEASE network to provide assistance to senior citizens. State staff will be part of the team assessing sanitary conditions of schools, restaurants, and other public facilities. They will provide homeowners with information on how to disinfect their homes, and if necessary, private wells.

Banking and Insurance will have staff available to answer questions about homeowners insurance and to direct homeowners, where appropriate, to the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Departments of Human Services and Community Affairs will be working together closely with local officials to locate shelters and housing for those displaced as a result of the flooding, as well as social services (DHS) and safety and damage assessment (DCA.)

The Department of Human Services will assist people with mental health services and translators.

The four departments of state government have joined to offer a coordinated immediate response because their staffs have expertise in locating housing, coordinating social services, assisting local governments in crisis, working with local health officials, and helping senior citizens with their needs.

In addition to the previous Bound Brook efforts, the Governor sent teams to assist with the victims of the Atlantic County floods in 1997, and the Edison pipeline disaster in 1994.

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