



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

PO BOX 004
CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Julie Plocinik
609-777-2600

TRENTON, NJ 08625
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Governor Requests Presidential Disaster Declaration for Coastal Counties

Gov. Christie Whitman has sent a letter to President Clinton requesting a Presidential Disaster Declaration for Atlantic and Cape May Counties to aid communities battered by the severe Northeaster from February 4 -8. Such a declaration would free up needed federal disaster aid for those communities hardest hit.

The Governor's request for a declaration would enable residents, businesses owners and municipalities in Atlantic and Cape May Counties to access much needed funding to help cover costs to repair and rebuild their communities. Damages in Monmouth and Ocean Counties are still being assessed for inclusion in a supplemental disaster declaration request.

If federal officials approve the request, residents of Atlantic and Cape May Counties could 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 their insurance.

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

Residents, small business owners and municipal officials who sustained losses should begin to document their damages in anticipation of federal disaster assistance. Such documentation will also aid residents and business owners in dealing with insurance related issues.

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 to be more than \$5 million. Additionally, preliminary estimates indicate that more than \$2.3 million in damages may qualify for assistance from the Small Business Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.

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