

# Christie Administration Announces Launch of “reNew Jersey Stronger” Housing Assistance Initiative

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## *\$780 Million Available for Homeowners Impacted by Superstorm Sandy*

**Trenton, NJ** – Marking a major step forward in the recovery from Superstorm Sandy, the Christie Administration today launched the reNew Jersey Stronger housing assistance initiative to assist homeowners impacted by the storm. Beginning today, eligible homeowners can apply for grant assistance at [www.renewjerseystronger.org](http://www.renewjerseystronger.org) or by calling **1-855-SANDYHM (1-855-726-3946)**.

The grants are designed to encourage homeowners to resettle in their primary residences and help them reconstruct, rehabilitate, elevate and mitigate their homes.

“We are working incredibly hard to get money out to Sandy-impacted individuals as quickly as possible, and today’s announcement demonstrates our commitment to this mission,” said Governor Chris Christie. “Sandy may have damaged homes in New Jersey, but it did not destroy New Jerseyans’ spirits. With the help of initiatives such as reNew Jersey Stronger housing grants, we will be back, stronger than ever.”

Today’s launch of the housing assistance programs comes less than a month after the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved New Jersey’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery Action Plan. The Action Plan details how the State will utilize \$1,829,520,000 in federal funding to help homeowners, renters, businesses and communities impacted by Superstorm Sandy. The reNew Jersey Stronger housing assistance initiative will utilize \$780 million of the allocation.

“While homeowners can apply online and by phone today, they will also be able to apply in-person on June 8 at Sandy Housing Assistance Centers which will be located in those counties most impacted by the storm. Housing counselors both at the centers and over the phone can help applicants navigate the entire process by providing support and clear guidance,” said Richard E. Constable, III, Commissioner of the NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which will administer the distribution of CDBG Disaster Recovery funds for New Jersey. “Our reNew Jersey Stronger housing assistance programs will help thousands of Sandy-impacted individuals.”

Under the reNew Jersey Stronger housing initiative, homeowners whose primary residences were damaged by the storm in the nine most-impacted counties (Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Union) may apply for two grant programs. Vacation homes, second homes and recreational vehicles or trailers are not eligible for the programs based on federal restrictions on the use of the funds.

**Homeowner Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) Program:** This \$600 million program will provide eligible homeowners up to \$150,000 in grant funds to aid the reconstruction, rehabilitation, elevation and mitigation of damaged primary homes. The program is intended to fill the gap between the costs needed to repair the home and other sources of funds the homeowner has received to repair their home such as insurance payments or assistance from FEMA or the U.S. Small Business Administration. Additionally, the program will help homeowners with the construction process by developing repair specifications, identifying qualified builders to do the construction work, and ensuring the quality of the work completed. Seventy percent of the funds will be reserved for low-to-moderate-income households in accordance with federal requirements.

All applicants under the RREM Program must have registered for assistance with FEMA and must have a household adjusted gross annual income of less than \$250,000. Priority will be given to homes that are deemed “substantially

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damaged" (damages exceed 50% of a home's assessed value) as a result of Sandy.

**Homeowner Resettlement Program:** This \$180 million program is aimed at encouraging Sandy-impacted homeowners to remain in the nine counties that were most seriously affected by the storm. This program will provide \$10,000 grants to eligible homeowners to encourage them to resettle in their existing home or resettle in the same county and in so doing will help to restore home values and stabilize many devastated communities. Homeowners must agree to remain in the county of their damaged residence for three consecutive years following the grant award. Sixty percent of the funds will be reserved for low-to-moderate-income households in accordance with federal requirements.

All applicants under the Resettlement Program must have registered for assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and must have sustained at least \$8,000 in damages or more than one foot of flooding on the first floor as a result of Sandy.

**Additional Details:**

The federal funding for these grant programs is limited and it is anticipated that absent an additional allocation from HUD, up to 6,000 households will receive a RREM grant and up to 18,000 households will receive a Resettlement grant. Therefore, while there is no formal deadline for accepting applications, there will be an initial application period that will run from May 24, 2013 to June 30, 2013. All completed RREM and Resettlement applications received by June 30 will then be in the first group to be processed. Once the application period closes, selection will prioritize those homeowners with the most damage (i.e., substantial, severe and major), whose homes are in the most impacted counties (i.e., Atlantic, Monmouth and Ocean), and who are of low- to moderate-income.

Whether individuals applied online, over the phone, or in person at a Sandy Housing Assistance Center, the State will ensure that all applicants have an equal chance to be selected through the process identified above. To accomplish this, the order in which applicants will be selected for processing following the end of the initial application period will be determined by an electronic random ordering process. In early July, applicants will be notified of their place on the list and whether they will receive an award out of HUD's initial allocation of funding. Anyone who is not successful in getting an award will be placed on a waiting list pending a future allocation from HUD. An announcement on future allocations is expected in September.

Applications will continue to be accepted after June 30, 2013, but these applicants will be processed only after all the most impacted homeowners from the first group have been served.

For more information on the reNew Jersey Stronger housing assistance initiative, including details about the application process, determination of eligibility, and award calculation, visit [www.renewjerseystronger.org](http://www.renewjerseystronger.org) or call the hotline number **1-855-SANDYHM (1-855-726-3946)**. Locations and directions to the Sandy Housing Assistance Centers that are opening June 8 will be posted at [www.renewjerseystronger.org](http://www.renewjerseystronger.org) as the information becomes available.

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