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Christie Administration Announces Debris Removal Assistance for Seaside Park and Seaside Heights in the Aftermath of Boardwalk Fire

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Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration announced today that it will provide funding to cover the cost of debris removal for the towns of Seaside Park and Seaside Heights in the aftermath of the September 12th boardwalk fire. The funding will be administered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) through the existing Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery-DR (CDBG-DR) program for Superstorm Sandy. The State's Superstorm Sandy Action Plan allows for demolition and debris removal activities. Businesses already supported through CDBG-DR funds and affected by the fire may apply for additional funding.

"We're moving as swiftly and aggressively as we can to help these communities and their boardwalk businesses rebuild from this unfortunate stumbling block to our overall Sandy recovery," said Governor Christie. "The extensive damage to the remaining structures is a safety hazard, so it's important they are removed quickly. By alleviating the costs associated with the debris removal process, state, county, and local officials as well as private entities can get down to work immediately to restore one of the Jersey Shore's most iconic boardwalks."

In addition, the State Department of Community Affairs (DCA) code enforcement units will assist the municipalities in determining which building are unsafe and must be demolished.

"The extensive damage caused by Thursday's fire has made the Seaside community's recovery from Superstorm Sandy all the more difficult," said DCA Commissioner Richard E. Constable, III. "To help Seaside Park and Seaside Heights overcome this major setback, we are allocating existing CDBG Disaster Recovery funds to assist with debris removal and demolition. Additionally, we will continue to work closely with local construction code officials in determining which fire-damaged buildings are now unsafe and thus must be torn down. My Department is fully committed to supporting these communities throughout their recovery and rebuilding efforts after Sandy and the fire." DCA will also provide planning assistance to the municipalities.

DCA staff along with local code officials will inspect the properties as soon as it is safely possible. Once there is a determination a property is an "imminent hazard" or unsafe to remain standing, the state and/or town can demolish the building 24 hours after notice to the owner.

DCA will accept an abbreviated application from the two impacted municipalities containing proposed activities and a budget. After application approval, DCA will sign a grant agreement with the municipalities to authorize the selection of a demolition contractor.

When the demolition and clearance of debris is complete, DCA and the NJEDA will work with the municipalities and local businesses to plan and implement the full Sandy recovery, inclusive of post-fire redevelopment. In addition, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will assist in ensuring the properties are free from contamination after the debris removal.

The State will conduct an analysis of duplication of benefits and ensure that the CDBG-DR funds are used only to cover costs not already paid by other sources, such as insurance or SBA. For the demolition of private structures, the state and/or municipality will place a lien on the property to enable recapture of any duplicative insurance proceeds, should they be paid later.

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