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## Four Years After Sandy: A Stronger New Jersey

Friday, October 28, 2016

Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)

*The Christie Administration Continues To Work With Homeowners, Business Owners, And Communities To Rebuild And Improve Infrastructure Four Years After Sandy*

### PREPARING NEW JERSEY FOR FUTURE STORMS

#### Reinforcing The State's Critical Infrastructure:

**Improvement of Electric Distribution Companies' Storm Planning and Response:** In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the Christie Administration made it a priority to improve energy resiliency, as well as emergency preparedness and response. To improve preparedness and response to future large-scale weather events, the N.J. Board of Public Utilities ordered 103 improvements to be undertaken by the regulated electric companies. The improvements focused on: preparedness efforts, communications, restoration and response, post event and underlying infrastructure issues. To date, every electric company complied with the requirements and did so by the required deadlines.

**Utility Infrastructure Hardening and Resilience Investments:** Shortly after Sandy, the N.J. Board of Public Utilities initiated a Storm Mitigation proceeding with the State's energy companies to find ways to harden New Jersey's utility infrastructure to withstand future storm events. As a result, PSE&G, Rockland Electric, Elizabethtown Gas, New Jersey Natural Gas, and South Jersey Gas all submitted storm mitigation plans to support and strengthen New Jersey's utility infrastructure. For instance, PSE&G invested \$1.2 billion in electric and gas infrastructure hardening measures such as: flood mitigation work at 29 substations, modernizing the company's gas distribution system and installing advanced technologies that spot outages more quickly and deploy crews to repair the damage more swiftly. Additionally, the Board has approved \$1.27 billion in natural gas infrastructure improvement projects. Not only do these projects improve the reliability of critical utility services, but they also boost the local economy by creating hundreds of well-paying, highly skilled jobs.

**New Jersey Energy Resilience Bank:** As part of the Christie Administration's continuing efforts to minimize the impact of future major power outages and increase energy resiliency, the State established New Jersey Energy Resilience Bank (ERB). The ERB is the first public infrastructure bank in the nation to focus on developing distributed energy resources at critical facilities like wastewater treatment plants and hospitals to allow them to remain operational during future power outages. In addition to strengthening resiliency, the benefits of these energy systems include: more stable energy costs, a cleaner environment through reduced emissions and increased overall efficiency. In total, the Christie Administration has dedicated \$200 million in federal funds toward ERB projects.

**FEMA Public Assistance:** More than \$2 billion in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance funds have been obligated to recovery projects submitted by State and local government entities. Approximately 86% of large FEMA Public Assistance projects in the State incorporate mitigation measures, an unprecedented figure showing our commitment to rebuilding better and stronger. This includes a \$260M mitigation award for Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, the largest mitigation award in FEMA history.

**NJ TRANSIT:** In 2014, NJ TRANSIT was awarded \$1.276 billion in federal funds for five projects designed to strengthen the agency's infrastructure. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded the grants as part of a highly competitive regional competition that included 13 states vying for \$3 billion in total available funding. Projects to better safeguard this critical component of New Jersey's infrastructure include:

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## NJ TRANSITGRID

Raritan River Drawbridge Replacement

Hoboken Long Slip Flood Project

In addition, NJ TRANSIT is advancing more than 100 other repair and recovery projects resulting from the impact of damaged by Sandy's storm surge and wind. These projects include the replacement of 163 wooden catenary poles on the Gladstone Line with resilient concrete and steel structures; the construction of a new, state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center which will centralize and coordinate response and communications, and the replacement of damaged electric substations with structures that better resist storm surge while continuing to provide power.

In Fiscal Year 2016, NJ TRANSIT has completed the following projects:

**Resilient Fuel Trucks:** As part of NJ TRANSIT'S Storm Preparedness Plan, two fuel trucks (\$750K) were delivered that are capable of travelling both on highways and on rails. The trucks will ensure that, during major storm events, fuel is available for locomotives, emergency generators and other critical facilities.

**Orange Annex Roof Replacement:** Orange Annex is located adjacent to the Orange Bus Garage in Orange Township in Essex County. The roof repair (\$2.4M) included removing the existing roof membrane and installing a new roof system over approximately 65,000 square feet of roof area.

**HBLR Initial Repairs:** System-wide repairs (\$6.9M) included replacement of switches, heaters, and an interlocking; installation of the wheel truing machine; and the purchase of spare cable for emergency repairs and to undertake a pilot program for a larger cable replacement effort to address damage to signal and power cables that were inundated with brackish water during Superstorm Sandy.

**Newark Light Rail Vent Fans:** The emergency ventilation fans at Penn Station were replaced (\$5.8M). These fans provide emergency evacuation of smoke for the tunnels and light rail station below Newark Penn Station.

**Reconstruction of Route 35:** Sandy carried away entire sections of Route 35 and destroyed the highway drainage system. In July 2013, the Christie Administration officially broke ground on the \$341 million construction project to completely rebuild Route 35 and install a more robust drainage system. All lanes on Route 35 were completed and opened by summer 2015 with final work on the drainage system, sidewalks, and landscaping finished this year.

**Wastewater Treatment:** To address the impacts of Sandy on water and wastewater infrastructure, the State focused efforts to leverage funding for these critical facilities around New Jersey. Last summer, New Jersey received a \$260 million Public Assistance grant for the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC), the largest mitigation grant FEMA has ever issued to the State of New Jersey. To date, the State has received \$443 million in Public Assistance Grants for PVSC. Funding will be used to build a comprehensive flood protection system at the wastewater treatment facility in Newark and incorporate microgrid technology to allow the facility to continue to operate when the larger electric grid fails. Additional funding supporting improvements and resilience at wastewater treatment plants include projects funded through the state Environmental Infrastructure Trust and energy resilience projects that can be funded through the ERB.

**Retail Fuel Station Program:** The \$7 million Retail Fuel Station (RFS) program allows retail fuel stations faster and more reliable access to back-up power during an energy emergency. Under revised guidelines issued in January 2015, all retail fuel stations statewide with a minimum gasoline capacity of 18,000 gallons were eligible to apply. Previously, the program was limited to those in close proximity to evacuation routes with minimum gasoline storage capacity of 30,000 gallons. The voluntary program is funded through the federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Under RFS, 127 stations are fully approved by the EDA for grant funding of \$3.95 million. To date, of the 127 approved stations, 41 have installed permanent generators and 74 have installed "quick connect" devices, which provide connection points for mobile generators.

#### **Strengthening Communities Against Flooding:**

**Beach Restoration and Dunes:** Over the past four years, the State has been working closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on a massive undertaking to repair and improve beaches, and to build the most comprehensive and continuous coastal protection system it has ever had.

DEP is working with the Army Corps to build 11 new coastal and flood protection projects statewide. These projects, which will cost more than \$1 billion, will help create an engineered, comprehensive shore protection system along the Atlantic coast, while also bolstering protections on the Delaware Bay coast, Raritan Bay, Sandy Hook Bay and tidal portions of the South River and the Passaic River.

To date, a \$57.6 million beach and dune construction project in Cape May County (encompassing beaches in southern Ocean City, Upper Township and Sea Isle City) is complete.

A \$38.2 million project to construct beaches and infrastructure in Monmouth County (Loch Arbour, Allenhurst and Deal) is complete.

A \$128 million beach and dune construction project covering 12.7 miles of beach on Long Beach Island is near completion.

Bids are in and work is expected to begin this winter on a beach and dune construction project on Absecon Island (Longport, Margate, Ventnor, and Atlantic City).

Bids are being accepted and work is expected to begin in the spring on a beach and dune project for Northern Ocean County (for all towns from Point Pleasant Beach to Berkeley Township).

The Army Corps also completed the repair and restoration of 21 miles of previously constructed beaches along the Monmouth County coastline at a cost of \$345 million. Approximately 8 million cubic yards of sand was replaced to restore beaches from Sandy Hook to Manasquan to their original design standard.

The Army Corps and DEP also are advancing studies of other flood-prone areas throughout the State, including South River, Leonardo, Shrewsbury River and the Highlands.

**Flood Hazard Risk Reduction:** As part of the rebuilding process, the State has prioritized projects that will reduce the risk of flooding from future storm events. The State has leveraged funding from FEMA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief Program, the Department of the Interior, the Federal Highway Administration and the State's Shore Protection Fund to help municipalities pay for critical storm resiliency projects. Completed and ongoing projects across the State include:

- Sea Bright Sea Wall
- Mantoloking and Brick Steel Sheet Piling
- Coastal Resiliency Projects
- Reusing Dredged Material to Restore Salt Marshes and Protect Communities
- Building Ecological Solutions to Coastal Community Hazards
- Enhancing Liberty State Park's Marshes and Upland Habitats
- Comprehensive Flood Mitigation Projects Along The Hackensack & Hudson Rivers
- Local Flood Risk Reduction Grant Program
- Belmar's Lake Como Discharge Piping System
- Brigantine Pump Stations
- Little Ferry Tide Gate and Pump Station

Additionally, in April 2015, Governor Christie announced a \$202 million resiliency project that will bolster storm protection for Union Beach, which is located along the Raritan Bay, and was one of the communities hardest hit by Superstorm Sandy.

The massive flood control project – funded by federal, state and local contributions – will consist of construction of levees, floodwalls, tide gates and pump stations. The project will also rebuild beaches, dunes, and groins, which are jetty-like structures that are designed to slow loss of sand from beaches. In addition, more than 25 acres of degraded wetlands will be restored to help better absorb flood waters.

In July 2015, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed dune construction, beach renourishment and groin construction for a \$105 million flood protection project in Port Monmouth. The second phase of the project, which includes construction of levees, a flood wall, tide gates, road closure structures, road raising and pump stations, is now underway.

## **REBUILDING HOMES TO CREATE AN EVEN STRONGER NEW JERSEY**

### **More Than \$1.6 Billion In Housing Assistance Out The Door:**

Four years after Superstorm Sandy struck New Jersey, thousands of families across the state are making progress towards rebuilding and returning to their homes with the assistance of federal grants administered by the Christie Administration.

Today, more than **\$1.6 Billion** in federal housing assistance is out the door to help Sandy-impacted families and communities rebuild houses and rental units devastated by the storm.

More than \$850 million has been disbursed to homeowners in the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) Program, meaning greater than 80 percent of all the dollars expected to be disbursed in RREM have made it to homeowners.

Of the approximately 7,600 homeowners actively participating in RREM to repair their homes, approximately 4,300 have completed construction and another 1,400 have returned home while construction is completed. Thus, RREM has already helped approximately 5,700 homeowners return to their pre-Sandy homes.

### **Giving Homeowners The Option To Sell Repetitively Damaged Property:**

Through New Jersey's Blue Acres Program, the Christie Administration is giving homeowners the option of selling their properties damaged by Superstorm Sandy in tidal areas of New Jersey at pre-storm value so families can relocate out of harm's way. In turn, the properties are demolished and then converted to open space, accessible to the public, for recreation or conservation to serve as natural buffers against future flooding. The State has allocated over \$300 million

for buyouts, including more than \$160 million through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and more than \$100 million of HUD Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds.

Blue Acres has surpassed \$100 million in acquisitions of homes in tidal areas affected by Superstorm Sandy or areas that have repeatedly flooded

**815** voluntary buyout offers have been made in 14 municipalities, and with 634 willing sellers so far accepting buyout offers.

**So far, Blue Acres has completed 541 property closings and demolished 412 properties.**

Additionally, the Program has facilitated short sale/payoff approvals from lenders for 57 homeowners who were upside-down on their mortgage for a total debt forgiveness that surpasses \$3.93 million.

#### **Repairing and Replacing Affordable Rental Housing Units**

Projects that will develop more than 6,500 affordable housing units have received funding commitments through Sandy rental recovery programs.

More than \$460 million has been committed to projects through the *Fund for Restoration of Multi-Family Housing* and the *Sandy Special Needs Housing Program*, which are projected to create approximately 5,600 affordable units. To date, 49 projects creating more than 2,100 affordable units already have been completed.

\$31 million in zero-interest loans have been approved to provide more than 190 affordable housing units in Sandy-impacted communities through the *Neighborhood Enhancement Program*; 22 of the projects are complete or nearing completion and another 20 projects are under construction or in pre-construction.

More than 300 Sandy-damaged housing units that will be rented to low-to-moderate income families have completed construction through funding from the *Landlord Rental Repair Program* and another 340 units are under construction.

#### **Assisting Families With Storm Related Expenses:**

While thousands of homes and rental units are repaired, many Sandy survivors have had to juggle mortgage payments, rent, and repair costs. In addition to \$190 million disbursed by FEMA for rental assistance, the State implemented critical recovery programs to address this need.

Homeowner Resettlement Program	\$203 million To 18,589 Households
Sandy Homeowner and Renter Assistance Program (SHRAP)	\$104.1 million To More Than 11,000 Households
Rental Assistance Program	\$18.2 million
*Additional \$12.5 million in CDBG Disaster Recovery funding available for Rental Assistance Program	

The *Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program* provides short-term, temporary tenant-based rental assistance in the form of a voucher to assist eligible low- and moderate-income households that were affected by Sandy, that continue to need rental assistance, and that plan to rent in the nine counties most impacted by Superstorm Sandy, which are Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Union. Priority is given to households at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. DCA has provided rental assistance to approximately 1,200 households.

#### **HELPING NEW JERSEY'S BUSINESSES GET BACK ON THEIR FEET**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority has awarded \$207 million to support economic revitalization in Sandy-affected communities through the Stronger NJ Business programs.

More than \$143 million in recovery grants and loans were approved to more than 1,265 small businesses through the *Stronger NJ Business Grant and Loan Programs*; 80% of the approved funding has been disbursed to date to 1,233 businesses.

Under the *Stronger NJ Neighborhood and Community Revitalization Program*, which provides funding for long-term economic revitalization priorities in Sandy-impacted communities, \$64 million has been approved to date for 35 municipal projects. Twenty-two projects have already broken ground with the majority of these projects expected to be fully completed by mid-2017.

#### **HELPING COMMUNITIES COPE WITH STORM EXPENSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACTS**

**Non-Federal Cost Share ("Match") Program:** In August 2016, the Christie Administration began accepting applications by local government entities through the Non-Federal Cost Share ("Match") Program for reimbursement of

their local share of FEMA assistance for emergency activities undertaken in the lead-up to Sandy and in the clean-up following the storm. Even though FEMA reimburses 90 percent of these costs, the 10 percent local share resulted in a significant financial burden for communities and their taxpayers. To alleviate this burden, the State is now allowing local government entities, including municipalities, counties, and school districts, to apply for funds to cover their 10 percent portion for the costs of Sandy debris removal and emergency protective measures.

**FEMA Community Disaster Loan Program:** Provides funds to eligible communities to assist with governmental functions. To date, over \$109 million in loan proceeds have been distributed to communities impacted by Sandy.

**Essential Services Grants:** Assisted Sandy-impacted local governments in funding essential services such as police, public works and education. Approximately \$133 million in Essential Services Grant awards were approved for 20 local governmental entities in the program's three rounds. The local governments included Asbury Park, Atlantic City, Brick, Brigantine Board of Education, Downe, Highlands, Keansburg, Keansburg Board of Education, Lavallette, Lavallette Board of Education, Little Egg Harbor Board of Education, Moonachie, Ocean County, Pinelands Regional Board of Education, Sea Bright, Seaside Heights, Seaside Heights Board of Education, Seaside Park, Toms River Township, and the Toms River Board of Education. All Essential Services Grant awards have been disbursed.

**FEMA Technical Assistance Program:** In order to assist communities with the PA process, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management established the Disaster Recovery Bureau (DRB), a grants management organization, to provide technical assistance to county and local governments as well as other eligible private non-profits. This assistance has included assigning State Applicant Liaisons (SALs) to provide face-to-face guidance through the FEMA process.

**Planning Initiatives:** Helps Sandy-impacted local governments improve their ability to withstand future storms. Planning grants for 49 local governments have been approved, with nearly \$12 million in grants committed. The local governments are making use of the grants to rebuild and develop in ways that reduce the risk of future storm damage and encourage sustainable economic growth, and to leverage other grant funds.

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