



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Seeks Presidential Disaster Declaration for Flood Damaged Areas in Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland and Ocean Counties

In the wake of flooding and torrential rains in southern New Jersey last week, Gov. Christie Whitman today made an official request for a Presidential Disaster Declaration for Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland and Ocean Counties. The request was made based upon preliminary damage assessments compiled by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials, in conjunction with state and local officials and the Office of Emergency Management.

"Upon review of preliminary damage assessments, I am asking for federal assistance to help New Jerseyans to recover and to rebuild their homes, their businesses and their families," said Gov. Whitman. "Residents in the affected areas can be assured that we are making every effort to provide them with the assistance that they need as a result of the storm."

"The Office of Emergency Management, state agency officials and county and local governments, in conjunction with FEMA officials, have made a tremendous coordinated effort in assessing the damages from last week's storm. I commend them for their teamwork," the Governor said.

Preliminary damage assessments revealed substantial damage to public and private property throughout the affected area, including damage to roads, highways and bridges. Damage assessment statistics are attached.

A Presidential Disaster Declaration would enable residents and business owners without flood insurance to access Small Business Administration grants and loans. The declaration would also enable state, county and local governments to recoup part of their clean up costs for flood damaged roads, bridges and infrastructure.

The Governor also sent a team of experts from the Departments of Insurance and Banking, Community Affairs and Transportation and Human Services to answer victims' questions and provide information on available

programs.

The Department of Community Affairs sent a team to the Atlantic County area today to assist in damage assessments and provide victims with information on available programs. Staff from the Division of Codes and Standards is assisting the State Police in assessing damages. Representatives from the Homelessness Prevention Program are on site to help arrange housing assistance for persons displaced by the flooding.

State Transportation personnel have been in the affected communities assisting local officials with damage assessments or road and infrastructure. They have also worked with county officials and Office of Emergency Management officials to construct detours to reroute traffic away from damaged roadways.

The Department of Banking and Insurance dispatched staff with expertise in homeowners' insurance to answer flood victims' questions about what their policies cover. More than 145 families have received assistance from the department. Additionally, consumers may call 609-292-5317 to obtain information from staff at the department. Consumers who have flood insurance can get information about how to file a claim by calling the National Flood Insurance Program at 1-800-427-4661.

The Department of Human Services also made mental health, family counseling and any other emergency welfare type services available to residents of the affected areas.

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