

Christie Administration Announces First Post-Sandy Buyout Offers Made To Owners Of Storm-Damaged Homes

Tuesday, July 16, 2013 Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)



Additional Offers Expected Over Next Month, While Applications Continue To Be Processed In Affected Towns

Trenton, NJ – During a tour of a Sandy-impacted South River neighborhood today, Governor Chris Christie announced that the first post-Superstorm Sandy buyout offers were made this week to Sayreville homeowners, who have been offered pre-storm value for their properties. These first offers came from a field of 129 Sayreville homes that have been approved for buyouts by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), while applications were filed last week with FEMA for the acquisition and demolition of another 85 homes from willing sellers in sections of South River and Sayreville. Dozens more offers are expected in the next four to six weeks, with closings expected to begin before Labor Day.

"We are committed to the process of moving willing sellers in flood-prone areas out of harm's way," said Governor Christie. "We promised these residents an expedited buyout process to help them move on with their lives as quickly as possible. We intend to keep that promise."

FEMA had previously awarded nearly \$29.5 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding for the 129 Sayreville purchases. The state will finance the remainder of what is expected to be the total \$39 million cost for the first 129 homes, with all closings to be completed within one year. An estimated cost of \$18.1 million is expected for the filed applications for the South River and Sayreville purchases, which includes a grouping of 76 homes in South River and 9 in Sayreville. An initial informational meeting with representatives from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), FEMA and other key agencies was held last week in South River to help ease those 85 residents through the buyout process.

"We know these are very difficult choices for families to make, to sell their homes and move from places they have long lived," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "We are committed to moving this process along quickly and smoothly, to work closely with FEMA to get applications processed promptly, and with minimal red tape, so families impacted by Sandy can move on with their lives and start over again."

These buyout offers are part of the Administration's overall plan to acquire approximately 1,000 homes impacted by Sandy and another 300 repetitively flood-damaged homes in the Passaic River Basin at a total estimated cost of \$300 million. In addition to providing fair market, pre-Sandy payouts to residents, the acquisition and demolition of these properties will eliminate the need for future disaster assistance since the land where these homes once stood will be maintained in perpetuity as open space.

Meanwhile, the state will continue to submit buyout applications to FEMA for other properties on a rolling basis over the next several months. The state is particularly targeting clusters of homes and entire neighborhoods for buyouts. The homes will be razed and the land will be maintained as open space that can handle future flood waters.

Representatives of the DEP's Blue Acres programs are in discussions regarding buyouts with officials and willing sellers in several other municipalities, including Woodbridge and Old Bridge. They also are personally visiting towns that have an interest in the Sandy buyout program. The DEP has created a special team to work closely with willing sellers and process their applications as quickly as possible. Case managers are working with individual homeowners personally to help guide them through the process.

The buyout program is a joint effort of the DEP, State Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and FEMA. DEP administers all Blue Acres purchases and OEM handles the financing through FEMA.

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When it was first established, the Blue Acres Program targeted purchase of lands in floodways in the Delaware, Passaic and Raritan rivers basins, but was later expanded to include all state waters. Eligible properties are those that have been storm damaged, that are prone to incurring storm damage, or that may buffer or protect other lands from such damage.

Homeowners interested in selling their homes through this process may contact the DEP's Blue Acres Program at 609-984-0500.

For more information on the Blue Acres Program, visit: http://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/blue_flood_ac.html.

For information on Sandy Recovery, visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/special/hurricane-sandy/>.

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TRANSCRIPT

Governor Christie: Sayreville is one of the first places I came to after Sandy, and walked through some neighborhoods here that have been completely devastated by what happened and it wasn't the first time that these neighborhoods had been hit and hit hard in this town, and as I walked through that day and talked to a number of residents, a number of them, the mayor was with me that day, came up to me and said you have to help us. Get us out of here. We can't take it anymore. You know, when folks in New Jersey tell you that, you have to listen because that's contrary to everything, the spirit that we have in this state. We're fighters; we're tough, and these people are fighters and tough. But there comes a moment when you just know that Mother Nature is getting the best of you, and that no matter how hard you fight and how hard you pray, that it's not going to change. And so I listened really hard to those voices and I have to tell you that some of the people I met that day have been in my mind for the last nearly seven months. I saw and felt emotion that day that I saw and felt in very few places across this state, really tough, gritty people who had just been beaten down and who needed some help, and so as we were fighting for this federal aid package in Washington I was fighting as hard as I was against both parties because of those folks that I met. I said to any number of members of Congress who I was personally lobbying either in person or over the telephone, you should meet some of the people that I've met, and you should see some of the things I've seen, and if you have, if you had seen those things, you wouldn't be arguing with me right now about this. You'd be just asking me, Governor, how much do those folks need and when, and how quickly can we get it to them? Well we fought, and the fight at the end would up to be a victory for us, and when we were sitting and figuring out what do we need to do, one of the first things that I decided we needed to do was to focus on those kind of homeowners and make sure that we take care of them. So what I'm happy to come to Sayreville to announce today is that the federal government has approved giving us \$300 million to buy out homes and we're going to start right here in Sayreville.

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