



Federal Flood Relief Approved for Area Counties

JEFFERSON CITY — While the flooding caused by Hurricane Ike in September has subsided, many homeowners, businesses and municipalities in our area are still dealing with the aftermath following the third round of major flooding to affect Lincoln and St. Charles counties this year.

Ike devastated the town of Silex, when the Cuivre River overflowed its banks. St. Charles County received less damage this go-round than from the previous summertime flooding from the Mississippi, but approximately 20 to 30 families in the city of St. Charles were also affected by Ike's fierce flash flooding.

Just a few days ago, President Bush authorized a major disaster declaration for the state that makes federal funding available to affected individuals in 15 counties, including Lincoln and St. Charles counties, and the independent city of St. Louis. This is good news because it will significantly help Missourians *and* those communities recover from the severe weather we experienced from Sept. 11 to 24.

While we don't know yet how much funding will be allotted, we do know that more than \$4.5 million in federal aid was approved for the 20 counties affected by the June 1-July 18 Missouri flooding. That is a substantial amount, which included financial assistance for such things as temporary housing, repair and replacement of property, low-interest loans, disaster unemployment service, crisis counseling support, and free legal assistance.

For this latest severe-weather event, residents and business owners in Lincoln and St. Charles counties can apply for individual assistance, while eligible local governments and certain other organizations in Lincoln County can also apply for public assistance.

Individual assistance can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other disaster-related expenses. It can also include low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. Public assistance provides grants on a cost-share basis, usually 75 percent (federal) to 25 percent (local), for emergency work and the repair or replacement of damaged public infrastructure.

Beginning this week, officials from the State Emergency Management Agency are conducting a series of disaster public assistance briefings for public officials in 47 counties approved for all

categories of federal public assistance. At the briefings, government and non-profit organizations will learn how they can be reimbursed for their emergency protection and life-saving actions, debris removal, and repairs to damaged public infrastructure. While there, they can complete and submit a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) form.

The first step for citizens and businesses to be considered for any federal assistance is to apply for assistance, either by applying online at www.fema.gov or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired.

Just recently, officials in Lincoln County also received some more good news. They will receive approximately \$1.4 million in additional federal aid to help repair levees damaged by the flooding in June and July. This aid is in addition to the \$6 million in Army Corps of Engineers work on levee repair in the county. TransCanada, an energy transportation provider that is building a crude oil pipeline through Lincoln County, also recently donated \$10,000 for local flood-relief efforts.

Recovery from natural disasters is never easy. But thanks to the tremendous support our area has received from federal, state and local agencies and our area organizations, businesses, and residents, we are making tremendous progress in recovering from — and moving beyond — these weather-related catastrophes.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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