



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of February 4, 2008

The State Emergency Management Agency *Protecting and Helping Missourians*

Last week, a major winter storm swept through Missouri causing school closings and dangerous road conditions throughout the state. This sort of weather causes me to reflect on the work of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). The department is in charge of making sure that Missouri's response to natural disasters is coordinated and Missouri's citizens are safe. The nerve center of the department is located just outside of Jefferson City. This facility, the State Emergency Operations Center, or SEOC, is a state-of-the-art facility with the ability to receive information from the field and from local governments via cellular phone, landline, radio communications, and satellite phones.

Over the past two years, Missouri has been hit especially hard by rough weather. During this time, Missouri has received 14 Presidential Disaster Declarations for severe weather, tornados, flooding, ice, or winter storms. While storms, tornados, and floods can be devastating every time communities are exposed to them, not every event qualifies for a Presidential Disaster Declaration. In order to receive this classification the damages must be widespread (over several counties) and exceed \$6 million in uninsured damages.

Between July 2006 and August 2007, SEMA helped secure \$114 million in federal relief funds that went directly into helping Missouri communities recover from disastrous events. These funds come in the form of three different types of assistance: Individual Assistance, Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance, and Public Assistance. Individual Assistance helped Southwest and South Central Missouri counties after severe storms and tornados hit in March 2006. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance helped by providing low interest loans to businesses throughout Missouri in January 2007 when severe ice storms hit the state. Local governments and non-profit organizations benefited from Public Assistance 11

times over the past two years including instances in Southwest Missouri in August 2007 after flooding and this January after some unusual winter tornados.

When a disaster hits, there is a significant demand placed on the areas affected as localities work to help those who need assistance. Utility companies often have to work to restore service to residents, and local organizations organize shelters and assistance for some of the worst off. A great deal of effort is also required from local and state emergency responders who work to assess the situation and get help to those who need it. Twenty-four hours a day, SEMA is on duty to respond to natural threats. While these situations are never pleasant, it is reassuring to know that SEMA is ready and able to protect and help Missouri citizens.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*