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Harrisburg, PA 17100-9364



Date: September 23, 2011
FEMA DR 4025/4030 NR-025
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News Release

Disaster Assistance Does Not Affect Benefits

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Registering for disaster assistance will not affect other benefits you may be receiving disaster officials say.

"If you receive disaster aid from the Commonwealth or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, it does *not* affect your Social Security or other benefits," said Commonwealth Coordinating Officer John Forr. "Also," he added, "the disaster assistance is not taxable."

The amount of disaster assistance an eligible applicant receives is based on two things. One is the amount of loss and damages caused by the storms and flooding. The other is the amount of the applicant's insurance settlement.

"Regardless of how much money you make, if you live in one of the presidentially-declared counties and were affected by either Hurricane Irene or Tropical Storm Lee, you should register with FEMA," said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Thomas J. McCool. "If you are eligible for a disaster-assistance grant, the money does not have to be repaid as long as it is properly spent for your disaster recovery."

The only way to know if you are eligible for disaster assistance is to register with FEMA. Register by calling **800-621-3362** or TTY **800-462-7585**. If you use **711** or **Video Relay Service (VRS)**, call **800-621-3362**. Operators are multilingual and calls are answered seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CDT. You also can register online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by **smart phone** or **tablet** at m.fema.gov.

After you register, you may receive a U.S. Small Business Administration application in the mail.

"If you receive a disaster loan application, you should complete and return it as soon as possible," Forr said. "If you qualify for a low-interest SBA disaster loan, you don't have to take it, but completing and returning the loan application form is important. If you *don't* return it, your disaster-aid process stops right there. If you *do* complete and return the form, you may qualify for additional assistance."

More information about this disaster is available at www.FEMA.gov.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.