Disaster Assistance Tops $2 Million for West Virginia Survivors

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. **–** Eight weeks after a major disaster was declared for West Virginia, more than $2 million has been approved for homeowners and renters affected by the severe storms and flooding of Aug. 28-30, 2023.

More than 600 households and businesses have registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to date.

"Exceeding $2 million in disaster assistance for the West Virginia Survivors of the August 2023 flooding is a testament to the whole community approach of recovery," said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Jeff Jones. "Our state partner, West Virginia Emergency Management Division, with the full support of the Governor's Office, has clearly demonstrated their commitment to the citizens of West Virginia by leading the charge for survivors to receive badly needed FEMA funding," he said.

"The Small Business Administration has supported the effort through processing over 60 application packages," Jones continued. "The local emergency managers, town and city officials, county health departments, police departments, and numerous private non-profit agencies have worked together to make sure survivors were aware of possible federal assistance. This tireless effort defines West Virginia and we are proud to be here."

Disaster assistance may include grants to help homeowners and renters pay for essential home repairs, personal property replacement, and serious disaster-related needs. Sixteen housing inspectors have completed more than 500 inspections of disaster-damaged properties to verify damage.

Federal disaster assistance is available to residents of five counties: Boone, Calhoun, Clay, Harrison and Kanawha.

FEMA

FEMA encourages all survivors who sustained disaster-related damage or losses to apply for assistance at their nearest Disaster Recovery Center. Residents can find a center by calling 800-621-3362 or going online to www.fema.gov/drc.

Survivors can also call 800-621-3362 (voice, 711 or video relay services) or 800-462-7585 for TTY users or go online to www.DisasterAssistance.gov.

In February, FEMA deployed three Disaster Survivor Assistance teams to visit storm-damaged homes to register people and answer their questions about disaster assistance. Thirty-one members visited a total of 2,800 houses and 89 community contacts, including faith-based organizations and private sector groups.

Other help is available to individuals:

- Free disaster legal assistance is available to West Virginia storm survivors. This service offers counseling on insurance claims, landlord-tenant issues, home-repair contracts, the replacement of legal documents destroyed by the storm and other legal matters. Call the legal hotline 866-255-4370.

Disaster assistance grants from FEMA are not taxable income and will not affect eligibility for Social Security, Medicaid, welfare assistance, food stamps and several other programs. Disaster grants are just that — grants that do not have to be paid back to the government.

One of FEMA's federal partners in disaster recovery, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), offers low-interest disaster loans for businesses of all sizes, homeowners, renters and private non-profit organizations. SBA disaster loans may cover repairs, rebuilding, as well as the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged real estate and personal property.

For more information about SBA loans, call SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955, email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov or visit http://www.sba.gov/disaster. Applicants may also apply online via SBA's secure website at http://www.sba.gov/disaster or in person at the nearest Disaster Recovery Center. For people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

For more information on West Virginia's disaster recovery, visit emd.wv.gov, West Virginia Emergency Management Division Facebook page, www.fema.gov/disaster/4756 and www.facebook.com/FEMA.