



FEMA

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Recovery Briefs

CRISIS COUNSELING IS AVAILABLE TO SURVIVORS OF NEW JERSEY FLOODING

SOMERSET, NJ --Survivors of the 12 flood-stricken New Jersey counties who are having difficulty managing the stress of the disaster can easily get help by making a free phone call.

Crisis counselors from the Division of Mental Health Services of the New Jersey Department of Human Services are available to help. They are available at many of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC). Stress can surface in many forms and often appears weeks or months after a traumatic event, notes Gladys Padro, Director of Disaster Mental Health Services. "It may include anger, fatigue, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, nightmares, depression, inability to concentrate, hyperactivity and/or increased alcohol or drug use."

Survivors experiencing mental health issues can call the New Jersey toll-free helpline: 1-877-294-4357 (HELP) or TTY (4356) for people with hearing disabilities. Additional information on how to access mental health services is available on line at <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/index.shtml>.

For information on FEMA's Disaster Recovery Centers call: 1-800-621-362.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAMS SPREAD THE WORD: HELP IS AVAILABLE

Community Relations teams from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and their state counterparts are putting disaster recovery information directly into the hands of flood survivors in the 12 New Jersey counties declared eligible for federal disaster assistance.

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Recovery Briefs, Page 2 of 3

These teams are canvassing flooded communities, giving individuals and small business owners information about available disaster assistance programs. Flood survivors are encouraged to register for assistance by going to www.disasterassistance.gov or calling **800-621-FEMA (3362)** or, for the hearing- or speech-impaired, **(TTY) 800-462-7585**. Telephone lines are open 7 a.m. to 1 a.m., while online registration is 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

CR team members wear FEMA photo ID badges. They seek out any location where people affected by the disaster might be found. In addition to talking with flood survivors, they give them information to help access recovery resources.

Grants to help pay for temporary housing needs, essential home repairs and other disaster-related expenses are available. Also offered are low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration that may cover homeowner, renter and business losses not fully compensated by insurance.

Team members also meet with representatives of community-based agencies, community leaders and public officials. When CR staff identifies unmet needs, they refer the information to the state or federal staff best able to respond.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP NOT REQUIRED FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE

People who are not U.S. citizens may be eligible for disaster assistance for damage from the storms and flooding of mid-March.

The aid is available to residents and businesses in all 12 New Jersey counties declared eligible for federal disaster assistance. It is available to citizens, non-citizen nationals, and qualified aliens. Qualified aliens include those with legal permanent residence (shown by green cards). Their status will not be jeopardized by requesting disaster assistance.

A minor child who is a citizen, non-citizen national or qualified alien can have a parent or guardian who is not eligible apply for assistance on the child's behalf. No information will be gathered on the adult's status.

The status of qualified alien includes:

- Legal permanent residents (those with green cards),
- Those with refugee or asylum status,
- Those whose deportation has been withheld,
- Those on parole into the U.S. for at least one year for humanitarian purposes,
- Those with conditional entry,
- Those who are Cuban-Haitian entrants,
- And those with petitions for relief based on battery or extreme cruelty by a family member.

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BE CAUTIOUS WHEN HIRING CONTACTORS TO REPAIR FLOOD DAMAGE

Watch out for people who try to scam you, warns Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"Be alert to anyone who claims to be a FEMA representative and is seeking or offering services but cannot produce a FEMA identification (ID) badge," says FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer William L. Vogel. "Anyone associated with FEMA always has a picture ID, and residents should feel free to ask to see it."

"We are asking residents to be mindful of those who seek to deceive businesses and individuals," State Coordinating Officer Lt Bill McDonnell said. "Never give out personal information and beware of those saying New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) or FEMA will pay for a service."

If someone claims to represent FEMA or the state and cannot produce the badge, contact your local law enforcement officials.

There is never a charge for any FEMA program or service. The best defense against scam artists and fraudulent contractors is a well-informed public.

Flood victims are particularly warned to use care when hiring contractors to repair flood-damaged property.

FEMA does not recommend or endorse any contractors. "If contractors claim they are authorized by FEMA to do repair work, do not believe it," Vogel said.

Tips for hiring contractors include:

- Get a written estimate
- Check references
- Ask for proof of insurance
- Use reliable, licensed contractors
- Insist on a written contract
- Get any guarantees in writing
- Make final payments only when work is completed
- Canceling a contract should be done within three business days of signing.

Receive up to the minute New Jersey disaster recovery information by following us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/femaregion2.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and 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.

