

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

FEMA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESIDENT ORDERS DISASTER AID FOR MISSISSIPPI STORMS

WASHINGTON – The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today that President Bush has authorized the use of federal disaster funds to help people and communities in Mississippi recover from the effects of severe storms that struck the state earlier this month.

Michael D. Brown, FEMA director and undersecretary for the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate, a part of the Department of Homeland Security, said the President took the action under a major disaster declaration issued today following a review of FEMA's analysis of the state's request for federal relief. The declaration covers damage to private and public property from the storms, tornadoes and flooding that occurred over the period of April 6-14.

Immediately after the declaration, Brown designated the following 28 counties eligible for aid to stricken residents and business owners: Amite, Attala, Claiborne, Clarke, Copiah, Franklin, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Kemper, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lincoln, Madison, Neshoba, Newton, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Walthall, Warren, Wayne and Yazoo.

The assistance, to be coordinated by FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance.

In addition, Brown said federal funds will be provided for the state and affected local governments to pay 75 percent of the approved costs for repairing or replacing damaged public facilities in the counties of Clarke, Hinds, Lauderdale, Lincoln, Madison, Newton, Scott, Warren and Yazoo.

Brown said the declaration also makes cost-shared funding available to the state for approved projects that reduce future disaster risks. He indicated that additional counties may be designated for aid later if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

Carlos Mitchell of FEMA was named by Brown to coordinate the federal relief effort. Mitchell said those who sustained losses in the counties designated for aid to affected residents and business owners can begin the disaster application process by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362), or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired**. The toll-free telephone numbers **will be available starting Friday, April 25**, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week until further notice.

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