

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
FEMA-MISSISSIPPI DISASTER NEWS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DR-1459-MS-NR04

April 29, 2003

Media Contacts:

Jennifer Griffin, MEMA 601-572-2496
Jay Eaker, FEMA 601-572-2498
703-946-2352 (After hours)

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAMS
VISIT STORM-AFFECTED COUNTIES**

Jackson, Miss -- Teams of community relations specialists will visit Mississippi's 28 declared disaster counties beginning tomorrow to explain state and federal assistance programs to business owners and homeowners who suffered damage during the April 6-14, 2003, severe storms, tornadoes and flooding.

Leon Shaifer of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the official in charge of state recovery operations, said emergency management officials in each of the affected counties would assist and advise the teams. "We believe face-to-face meetings with those affected by the storms are vital to giving them assurance that they will receive the needed help in getting their lives back on track as quickly as possible."

Federal and state assistance is now available to businesses, individuals and families in Amite, Atalla, 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 counties.

Residents who suffered storm damage should apply for state and federal assistance by calling the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) toll-free number, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **TTD 1-800-462-7585** for the speech or hearing impaired. This includes temporary housing and help with needs not covered by insurance or community service agencies.

"We will have community relations people in the disaster area beginning tomorrow and they will remain there as long as they are needed," said Carlos Mitchell, the FEMA official in charge of federal recovery operations. All community relations representatives will be easily recognizable by their MEMA or FEMA badges, which have photo identification."

The purpose of the visits is to familiarize residents and business owners with the various types of state and federal disaster assistance that is available to them. This will provide an opportunity for concerned individuals to meet fact-to-face with officials to discuss their particular situations and seek guidance with applying for disaster aid.

###