

MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2000 1:00 P.M.

SUBJECT: GOVERNOR REQUESTS SBA ASSISTANCE IN WAKE OF TORNADO

(JACKSON) – Gov. Ronnie Musgrove requested the Small Business Administration declare a disaster in Lauderdale County, clearing the way for federal low-interest loans for tornado victims. The SBA's Disaster Assistance Program for homeowners, renters, landlords, and businesses will make loans available for those who had uninsured or underinsured damages caused by the severe weather.

The request follows a preliminary damage assessment conducted yesterday afternoon with local, state and federal officials. The SBA administrator may declare a disaster when 25 or more homes or businesses within a jurisdiction sustain major damage or are destroyed, with 40 percent uninsured losses on the structures.

Governor Musgrove joined MEMA Director, Robert Latham, and other emergency management officials for a tour of the storm damaged area on Tuesday, December 19, 2000. During his tour, the Governor had the opportunity to visit with business owners, homeowners, and others affected by the storm. "We are taking swift action to ensure that these families and individuals get the assistance they need to recover from the damage to their property," said Governor Musgrove.

Gov. Musgrove requested the SBA disaster declaration on Monday, December 18, after declaring a State of Emergency for Lauderdale County.

In addition to the SBA request, Gov. Musgrove directed MEMA to implement the State Disaster Housing Program for storm victims. Available statewide, the State Disaster Housing Program can provide up to three months rental assistance or minimal home repair money for homeowners, or, in the case of people who are already renting, one month of rental assistance. The amount of the grant is determined based on an application-by-telephone process.

To apply for the State Disaster Housing Program grants, persons whose homes have been made unlivable by the storm may telephone 1-800-434-4243. The DHP hotline is staffed 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Although the American Red Cross is still in the field in Lauderdale County, estimates indicate about 93 homes in Lauderdale County were affected by the F2 tornado that struck on December 16. The American Red Cross opened 2 Family Service Centers, one in the Dalewood and one in Russell/Marion. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross continue to serve meals and snacks to victims and emergency workers.

The SBA field representative stated that Lauderdale County met the requirements for a SBA Disaster Assistance Program to be awarded to the victims in the damaged areas.

"The SBA's quick response to the Governor's request will allow us to better begin the recovery process for those who were impacted by the tornado," MEMA Director Robert Latham said. "Having SBA disaster assistance available to Mississippians in need significantly addresses the larger needs of disaster victims."

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