



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **JANUARY 11, 2000 5:15 P.M.**
SUBJECT: SBA DISASTER DECLARATION ISSUED FOR UNION COUNTY, OTHERS

(JACKSON) – Gov. Kirk Fordice Friday afternoon requested the U.S. Small Business Administration declare Union County a disaster area following a damage assessment conducted by local, state and federal officials.

Union County was among the hardest hit areas in the state when a severe weather system moved through the state on Jan. 3, spawning a tornado that traversed the county. If declared a disaster area, storm victims will be able to apply for low interest loans to repair their damaged homes. In addition to Union, the contiguous counties of Benton, Lafayette, Lee, Marshall, Pontotoc, Prentiss and Tippah could also be declared by SBA.

While under no specific timeframe within which to act on the governor's request, state officials expect SBA to make a determination early next week.

Gov. Fordice declared a state of emergency to exist in areas of Mississippi affected by severe weather on Tuesday, Jan. 4. Under that proclamation, the State's Disaster Housing Program was implemented statewide.

People whose homes were made unlivable by the storms may apply for the assistance by calling **1-800-434-4243**. Both homeowners and renters may apply.

The Disaster Housing Program was established by the Mississippi Legislature to assist Mississippians with recovering from the effects of a disaster when federal assistance was unavailable. The application process takes about five minutes to complete. Callers should have on hand social security numbers and insurance settlement information prior to calling.

Homeowners may qualify for up to three months rental assistance, or, if they choose not to apply for rental assistance, may be eligible for minimal repair assistance in an amount up to the amount they would have received for rental assistance. Renters may qualify for one month rental assistance and are not eligible to receive repair funding.

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