



Deadline to Apply For Disaster Aid Extended For Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), redoubling efforts to reach victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas who, for whatever reason have never applied for help, has extended the application deadline to Jan. 11, 2006.

At the same time officials of the nation's primary emergency management agency appealed to community civic groups, churches and public media to lend a hand in spreading this word to help ensure that no one who suffered losses in these massive storms will be overlooked.

"There are still hundreds of people registering every day," said Vice Admiral Thad Allen, principal federal official and federal coordinating officer for the hurricane recovery efforts. "We want to make sure that everyone affected by the storms, especially those who have evacuated outside their home state, have the opportunity to register. That is why we are extending the deadline."

January 11, 2006 will now be the last day for residents to apply for state and federal disaster assistance to help them recover from the hurricanes that devastated the Gulf Coast. January 11, 2006 will also now be the deadline for submitting applications for low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

To apply for disaster assistance call FEMA at **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**, or **TTY 1-800-462-7585** for people who are speech or hearing-impaired. Lines are open 24-hours a day, seven days a week until further notice. Hurricane victims may also register online at www.fema.gov or they can get assistance in registering at any Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

After the application deadline, FEMA's toll-free phone line still will be available to assist those who have already registered. Applicants who have questions about disaster assistance programs or questions about the status of their previously filed applications should continue to use FEMA's toll-free number and press the number for the Help Line when prompted. To date, over 2.5 million registrations have been filed for disaster assistance, and over \$4 billion has been approved for both disasters spanning the affected states.

SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations.

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