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News Release

AS COMMUNITIES SEEK PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, FEMA EXPLAINS THE PROCESS

BURLINGTON, Vt. – With towns scrambling to complete urgent repairs on infrastructure such as roads and public buildings before winter sets in, state and federal officials want people to understand the process for disbursing funds to communities following the damage left by Tropical Storm Irene.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Public Assistance (PA) program provides states, municipalities, and certain private nonprofit organizations with funding to clean up and repair public infrastructure. However, the process includes safeguards to ensure that the money is spent properly.

“We understand that Vermont cities and towns are working as fast as they can to fix their infrastructure, and want to see the money as quickly as possible,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Craig Gilbert, for FEMA’s mission in Vermont. “We’re working to get it to them as fast as we can, but we have to follow the rules like everyone else.”

Public Assistance provides funding to repair roads and bridges, put water systems and utilities back in order, rebuild libraries and replace damaged books, repair hospitals and emergency services, rebuild schools and universities and infrastructure restoration statewide.

FEMA’s Public Assistance program typically reimburses 75 percent of the eligible cost of these projects, with the state and municipality sharing the remainder.

The Public Assistance funding program process includes the following steps:

1. Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) are conducted by local, state and federal officials after a disaster has struck.
2. The Governor requests federal assistance.
3. The President then may grant a disaster declaration for counties within the affected state.
4. FEMA holds applicant briefings to explain eligibility
5. The public entity makes a formal request to the state for Public Assistance (RPA).
6. At the “Kick-off” meeting, FEMA assigns a Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC) to work with the applicant to prepare project worksheets.

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AS COMMUNITIES SEEK PUBLIC ASSISTANCE– Page 1

7. FEMA coordinates with the State's Office of Emergency Management and Regional Planning Commissions to schedule applicant meetings and site visits.
8. FEMA reviews the eligible cost of a project.
9. FEMA then reviews the project.
10. If the project is approved, federal funds are obligated to the state which in turn provides funding to the applicant.

Public entities can learn more by visiting:

<http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/index.shtm>



FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). Those with a speech disability or hearing loss who use a TTY may call 1-800-462-7585 directly; or call 1-800-621-3362 if using 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS).

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

SBA disaster loan information and application forms may be obtained by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for people with speech or hearing disabilities) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET; Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET or by sending an e-mail to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Applications can also be downloaded from www.sba.gov or completed on-line at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

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