

SUMMER STORM VICTIMS URGED TO RETURN SBA LOAN APPLICATIONS Failure To Return Loan Applications Will Shut Them Out From Disaster Aid

SYRACUSE, NY - New York residents affected by the severe storms, flooding and tornadoes that struck the state between July 21 and August 13, who have received a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan application packet should complete and return the application as quickly as possible, otherwise the process of obtaining federal disaster assistance stops. Disaster aid may be available to those affected by the summer storm, but individuals must return a completed loan application by October 28. SBA disaster loans and other grants referrals are halted until the completed SBA packet is returned. Federal and state disaster programs were triggered when President Bush declared 14 counties a major disaster, at the request of Governor George E. Pataki.

SBA Area Director William E. Leggiero, Jr. said, "Filing an application does not bind a disaster victim to a loan - it merely gets that person into our system quicker, giving them one more recovery option. We urge individual homeowners and renters to complete their application and return it to the SBA before the filing deadline. If an individual is not eligible for a loan they may be considered for other disaster assistance from FEMA or the State which may be in the form of grants."

Disaster programs available to eligible homeowners, renters and businesses in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Columbia, Delaware, Fulton, Greene, Livingston, Montgomery, Ontario, Rensselaer, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties include home repair; temporary housing; disaster-related needs for personal property losses; reimbursement for medical, dental and transportation expenses; and low-interest disaster loans from the SBA.

"If you have misplaced your SBA loan application or if you have questions about the SBA forms, you can call the FEMA help line 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TDD) for the hearing impaired, or call SBA directly at 1-800-659-2955," said Justo Hernández, federal coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) disaster recovery operation. "The submission of this application is the key to completing the assistance process."

Edward F. Jacoby, Jr., State Coordinating Officer and Director of the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) said, "We are making every effort to ensure that anyone affected by the summer storms applies for the disaster aid they are entitled to. Federal and state assistance is available, but storm victims must take that first step and apply."

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages Citizens Corps, the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.