

Update on Flood Recovery

When Legislators convened last January, one of the first orders of business was helping Iowans recover from the storms and floods of 2008. Of particular concern were the items that were not covered by insurance, charities, or government programs. For example, programs were available to restore a kitchen but not to buy appliances. As a result, the Governor and Legislators allocated \$7.85 million for the Iowa Unmet Needs Disaster Grant Program.

Since the program started in March, more than 7,000 Iowans have been assisted by the program so far. All the funding has now been committed and, after October 16, applications were no longer accepted.

The grants were designed to cover immediate unmet needs for individuals with household incomes at or below 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines. The program provided grants up to \$2,500 per household to help pay for personal property, home repair, food assistance, mental health assistance, childcare, transportation, and temporary housing.

The program provided reimbursement for eligible expenses or, in cases where the applicant did not have up-front funds, local Long Term Recovery Committee's could provide a voucher, to be paid to the vendor for an item or service.

Jumpstart Housing Program

One of the most pressing problems for Iowans was housing needs. Even before federal funding was available, the State created the Jumpstart Housing program to help Iowans repair their homes, rent new homes, or cover mortgage payments while their home was being repaired. Federal money was later added to the allocation to help more Iowans.

As of October 29, over 3,200 Iowans have received help.

- Total number of applicants: 4,260
- Total amount requested in those applications: \$71.7 million
- Total amount obligated: \$56.5 million
- Total amount disbursed: \$46.6 million
- Average award: \$17,316
- Applications ineligible for the program: 537

Mobile Homes Still in Use

About 120 families are still living in rent-free mobile homes provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), down from a high of 560 families after the flood. FEMA had wanted everyone out of the trailers by November 27, but has extended that deadline until late June 2010.

Iowa has now asked that the mobile homes remain in Iowa until the end of July to accommodate summer school schedules for the kids and to provide additional time for housing projects and buy-outs to be complete. Iowa is also asking the federal government to waive rent from flood victims still living in those mobile homes. If the mobile home residents are forced to pay the fair market rate in Cedar Rapids, that would be about \$650 for a two-bedroom unit.

Iowa has not heard anything back from FEMA on either request. Once it comes, the public will be notified of the decision.