

Assistance in a Disaster Made Easier

When disasters strike, Iowans want to get the damage repaired as quickly as possible and move on with their lives. To help middle and low income Iowans, the Legislature created an assistance program to meet disaster-related expenses or serious needs.

The program, created following the ice storms of 2007, provides funding for Iowans with annual household income under 200% of the federal poverty level based on the size of the household (\$44,100 for a family of four). Eligible expenses are limited to personal property, home repair, food assistance, and temporary housing assistance. The grant cannot exceed \$5,000.

To get the assistance, you need to show a receipt for the goods or service and you are reimbursed. However, as the floods of 2008 showed, many people cannot afford to make the purchase and then wait to be reimbursed. As a result, a special program for flood and tornado victims was created allowing the individual to receive a voucher for the specific item.

This week, the Iowa House passed House File 2294, which will now expand the voucher system to cover any disaster. This should help Iowans who suffered snow and ice storm-related damage this winter in counties declared disaster areas by Governor Culver. The measure now goes to the Iowa Senate for their approval.

To learn more about the disaster program, go to <http://www.dhs.iowa.gov> and click on "Storm Help."