

Important Information to Know After a Disaster

SAFETY –

- If you evacuated, check with your local first responders and emergency managers before returning home to determine if it is safe to return. After a natural disaster there is the potential for natural gas leaks and downed power lines.
- Never re-enter your neighborhood or home if you smell gas.

CLEAN-UP

- Always take pictures of your property/home and belongings before beginning any clean-up efforts and take pictures throughout the process.
- In the event of water damage, public health officials will recommend that clean-up begin as soon as possible. It is not necessary to wait for emergency response agencies to visit your home. However, it is important that you document the clean-up efforts by taking photographs, keeping receipts of supplies purchased.
- Always check credentials of contractors coming by offering services
- Volunteers will usually be with a faith based organization or some other type of non-profit. Always ask for identification.
- Local emergency managers will establish Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) and Volunteer Recovery Centers (VRC) within a few days of the disaster. It is always best to visit these locations, if possible, to obtain assistance with clean-up efforts. The VRC will be distributing cleaning supplies and materials.

APPLICATION PROCESS – If a disaster is large enough and there has been a certain amount of damage, then the President can declare a state of emergency and send federal assistance to aid in the recovery efforts. Affected residents can apply for assistance in several ways:

- Phone – by calling the 800 number that FEMA and the local media will announce or 800-621-FEMA
- Internet – at DisasterAssistance.gov
- Visit from a Disaster Survivor Assistance Team – these are groups of FEMA and local emergency management staff and reservists that are visiting the affected area and can assist residents on site in applying for available assistance. *Note – these individuals will be well-marked with clothing and/or badges and vehicles that identify them clearly. Never provide your personal information to someone you do not know.*
- Disaster Recovery Centers – these are centers set up in the affected areas usually within three to seven days after a disaster. These centers will be staffed with federal, state and local emergency response agencies (Federal Emergency Management Agency, state

emergency management, Small Business Administration and non-governmental organizations such as Red Cross, Salvation Army and others).

IMPORTANT TIPS

- You will receive an identification number when you initially apply for assistance. This number will be used in all correspondence and in all conversations regarding your application so it is extremely important that you keep up with this number.
- FEMA and other emergency responders will only accept one application per household. So it's important that you coordinate the application process with your family members or others living in your household.