



## President Declares Major Disaster For California Storms

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» Federal Aid Programs For California Disaster Recovery

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today that President Bush has declared a major disaster for California, opening the way for the use of federal funds to help people and communities recover from the effects of a recent series of severe storms.

Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response, said the President took the action following a review of FEMA's analysis of the state's request for federal aid. The declaration covers damage to private and public property from severe storms, flooding, debris flows and mudslides that occurred over the period of December 27, 2004 through January 11, 2005.

After the declaration, Brown designated the counties of Los Angeles and Ventura eligible for federal aid to stricken residents that can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance.

In addition, Brown said federal funds will be provided for the state and affected local governments and certain private non-profit organizations to pay 75 percent of the eligible costs for repairing or replacing damaged facilities in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura. The funding also covers state and local government costs for debris removal and emergency services related to the disaster.

Brown said the declaration also makes federal funds available on a cost-shared basis for approved hazard mitigation projects in the counties of Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura. He indicated that additional designations may be made later if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

David Fukutomi of FEMA was named by Brown to coordinate federal recovery operations. Fukutomi said that those in the counties designated for aid to affected residents and business owners can begin the disaster application process by registering online at <http://www.fema.gov> or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers will be available starting tomorrow from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week until further notice.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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