



FEMA

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Disaster News

FEMA TOLL-FREE NUMBER PROVIDES DISASTER HELP IN MANY LANGUAGES

MOORHEAD, Minn. – If you need information to apply for disaster assistance and you communicate best in a language other than English, you can call FEMA’s toll-free number and talk with someone who literally speaks your language.

“We’re making every effort to reach everyone who has suffered damages as a result of the recent flooding, no matter what language they speak,” said FEMA’s Michael H. Smith, federal coordinating officer (FCO). As FCO, Smith directs the federal portion of the disaster response and recovery efforts in Minnesota.

Languages spoken by residents of Clay, Norman, Traverse and Wilkin counties include Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Croatian/Bosnian/Serbian, Laotian, Kurdish, Somali, Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese.

“It’s important that everyone affected by this disaster is able to obtain the information they need,” said HSEM’s Kris Eide, state coordinating officer. “If you know someone, a friend or relative, who has limited English proficiency, please let them know FEMA’s toll-free number is supported by translators fluent in most of the world’s languages.”

The first step in getting disaster assistance is to register with FEMA. Even if you have registered your damage with local, county or Red Cross officials, you still must apply with FEMA and receive a nine-digit case number.

Residents of the counties authorized to receive Individual Assistance -- Clay, Norman, Traverse and Wilkin -- can register for assistance online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov at any time or by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362) (TTY 1-800-462-7585)**. The telephone-registration lines are open **7 days a week 6 a.m. to midnight CDT** until further notice. The application deadline is **June 9, 2009**.

Residents recovering from the effects of the recent Red River flooding who have registered for assistance and have questions or concerns about disaster-related needs can call the toll-free number, select the **Helpline** option and get important information in the language they are most comfortable with.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) officials urge *all* applicants to stay in touch with FEMA by using the **Helpline** to check on the status of an application, to update contact information, to change an inspection appointment, to update other application information, or to ask other recovery-related questions.

FEMA leads the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation. The agency is committed to reducing the loss of life and property and supporting a culture of readiness for all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other catastrophes.

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