



**GEMA**



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# Disaster News

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**Joint Information Center:**

FEMA/State News Desk: 229-401-2770

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALISTS CANVAS DISASTER REGION**

**CORDELLE, Ga.** -- Community Relations (CR) specialists from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Georgia Emergency Management (GEMA), and county emergency management agencies are reaching out to people affected by the March 1-2 severe storms and tornadoes.

Six counties – Sumter, Baker, Crawford, McDuffie, Mitchell and Taylor – have been declared eligible for Individual Assistance (IA) to disaster households.

Teams are canvassing communities in the declared areas, offering individuals and small business owners information about available disaster assistance programs. These include grants to help pay for temporary disaster housing needs; grants for essential repairs needed to restore residences that are not safe, sanitary and functional; low-interest loans to repair or replace damaged property; and replacement grants for serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs.

"We rely on our CR staff not only to get the word out, but also to find out first-hand the problems communities and individuals are facing," said Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch, FEMA's top official for the Georgia disaster recovery. "Our field people are professionals from all walks of life and locations. Since their work is up close and personal, they gain the satisfaction of helping people who may otherwise not be aware of entitlements."

Team members also meet with representatives of community-based agencies, community leaders and public officials. When CR staff identifies unmet needs, information is communicated to the state or federal staff best able to respond.

State Coordinating Officer Charley English, who heads the state disaster recovery effort as director of GEMA said, "We are making every attempt to inform disaster victims about the benefits available."

Disaster victims are urged to register for assistance first by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **TTY 1-800-462-7585** for the hearing or speech impaired. Victims can also register online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or visit a DRC for more information.

(MORE)

*FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident, initiates mitigation activities and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA works closely with state and local emergency managers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, economic status or retaliation. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or contact your State Office of Equal rights. If suspicious of any abuse of FEMA programs, please contact the fraud hotline at 1-800-323-8603.*

*FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.*

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Editors: For more information on Georgia disaster recovery, visit [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or [www.gema.state.ga.us](http://www.gema.state.ga.us)