FOR FLORIDA COUNTIES
AS NORTH FLORIDA’S LAST OPEN DISASTER RECOVERY CENTER CLOSES, HELP IS STILL AVAILABLE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – As the need for its services has dwindled, officials have decided to close the doors of the last open Disaster Recovery Center (DRC), located in Hamilton County. The center will close at 6 p.m. Friday, May 22, but representatives from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will provide service for an additional three days at a nearby location, and help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is still as close as a computer or phone.

In a joint effort to serve storm survivors, the state of Florida and FEMA opened 14 DRCs in north Florida following the presidential declaration that opened the door for federal disaster assistance. So far, disaster specialists at the centers have answered questions for 1316 visitors. And, since April 30 when it opened, the Hamilton County DRC has served 279 people, making it the most visited recovery center in north Florida.

FEMA And The State Continue To Help

After this last DRC, in Hamilton County, closes its doors, storm survivors can still apply for FEMA assistance, get answers to questions and check the status of an existing application by contacting FEMA. The FEMA toll-free registration and Helpline hotline is 800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 800-462-7585 for those with a speech or hearing impairment. Multilingual operators are available. Representatives will provide assistance from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. local time, seven days a week. Applications can also be completed and the status of any pending applications checked online at www.disasterassistance.gov.

It’s not mandatory to visit a DRC, but storm survivors who visit the centers may apply for assistance, check the status of an existing FEMA application and get additional information about resources available to eligible applicants.

Counties in which applicants may be eligible for Individual Assistance from FEMA due to storms and flooding between March 26 and May 5 include: Calhoun, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Holmes, Jackson, Lafayette, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, Wakulla, Walton and Washington.

HAMILTON DRC CLOSING AT 6 P.M. FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2009:
NOTE: The DRC is open through Friday, May 22, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Disaster Help From SBA

Storm survivors may visit the SBA help center, called a Disaster Loan Outreach Center (DLOC), in Hamilton County from Tuesday, May 26, through Thursday, May 28. Visitors will get answers to questions about low-interest disaster loans, assistance with completing SBA loan applications and be able to submit completed applications.

NOTE: The DLOC will be open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visiting a DLOC is not required, but after disaster strikes most federal assistance to residents and businesses comes in the form of low-interest disaster loans from SBA, so it’s important for people who receive loan applications to complete and return them promptly. Those who receive an SBA loan application but fail to complete and return it might miss out on FEMA grant assistance they may otherwise be found eligible for.

For more information about SBA loans call SBA’s Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (or 800-877-8339 for the hearing impaired) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. EDT (closed in observance of Memorial Day) or by sending an email to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Business loan applications may be downloaded from www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance. Applications may be returned at a DLOC or mailed to: U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, For Worth, Texas, 76155.

Those affected by the disaster may apply for disaster loans from SBA’s secure Web site at https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/.

The SBA offers low-interest disaster loans to homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes and certain private non-profit organizations. These loans are to repair or replace homes, businesses and personal property not covered by insurance and damaged by the severe storms in north Florida.

###
FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

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.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management and State Emergency Response Team (SERT) coordinates disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation programs with all 67 counties and the federal government. For more information and to GET A PLAN! please visit www.FloridaDisaster.org.

###