HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK FOR FLORIDA COUNTIES
THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE MORE YOU KNOW YOU NEED FLOOD INSURANCE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Since 1978 Santa Rosa County and its residents and businesses have received more than $417 million from flood insurance settlements. What would this and other north Florida counties look like today if they didn’t have flood insurance?

Flood insurance, which is issued through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), has helped hundreds of thousands of north Florida residents repair and rebuild after devastating floods.

Hurricane season begins June 1 and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State Emergency Response Team would like everyone living in north Florida to ask themselves this very important question: Can I afford to be without flood insurance?

“Many Floridians already know how important flood insurance is because more people in our state have flood insurance policies than in any other state,” said State Coordinating Officer Doug Wright. “But, I think the more people know about flood insurance the more likely they are to buy a policy. Some risks just aren’t worth it.”

Due to losses and damages from flooding between March 26 and May 5 of this year, many north Florida homeowners, renters and businesses have filed claims against their flood insurance policies and/or applied for FEMA disaster assistance. No one knows what the rest of the year may bring, but a quick look back at what happened after Tropical Storm Fay last year demonstrates why having flood insurance can be a very good idea.

In the wake of Tropical Storm Fay, Florida’s homeowners and renters received a combined total of $18.6 million in FEMA (Individuals and Households Grant Program) assistance, with the average household receiving $3,472 in non-repayable grants. However, those with active flood insurance policies received an average of $21,739 from NFIP settlements, and some who received flood insurance settlements also received grants from FEMA—thereby making recovery faster and easier.

Other insurance, like homeowners’ or renters’ insurance doesn’t cover flood damage. Only flood insurance covers damages caused from rising water in homes and businesses.

“Disaster assistance from FEMA is not meant to bring people back to the situation they were in before a disaster, but having flood insurance can, so it’s important to think ahead to what flooding could cost your family,” said Jeff
Bryant, federal coordinating officer.

Just how much could a flood cost you? Go to www.floodsmart.gov and check out why just six inches of water in your home could cost more than $11,000. The Web site will also help you determine how much various amounts of flood insurance coverage costs and what policies will cover.

As of February 28, 2009, and since 1978, more than $786 million has been paid out for flood insurance settlements to policy holders in the 17 north Florida counties currently eligible for Individual Assistance from FEMA. Those counties include Calhoun, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Holmes, Jackson, Lafayette, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, Wakulla, Walton and Washington.

Since 1978 NFIP had paid out more than $3.5 billion in flood insurance settlements to Florida residents, and as of February 2009 there were more than two million active flood insurance policies in these counties.

Another significant benefit to having flood insurance is that it pays for damage no matter how small or large the flood and whether or not there is a disaster declaration. However, it’s important to keep in mind that it takes 30 days from the time of purchasing it for a flood insurance policy to become active.

Further, if you have a secondary or vacation home in Florida there may be an added incentive to have flood insurance. FEMA only provides disaster assistance for primary residences, so when disaster strikes the agency can’t help repair or replace a second property.

Common Misconceptions About Flood Insurance

**Myth:** The NFIP does not offer basement coverage.

**Fact:** While basement improvements such as finished walls and floors and personal belongings in a basement are not covered by flood insurance, structural elements and essential equipment within a basement are. The following items are covered under building coverage, as long as they are connected to a power source, if required, and installed in their functioning location:

- Sump pumps;
- Well water tanks and pumps, cisterns, and the water in them;
- Oil tanks and the oil in them, natural gas tanks and the gas in them;
- Pumps and/or tanks used in conjunction with solar energy;
- Furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners, and heat pumps;
- Electrical junction and circuit breaker boxes and required utility connections;
- Foundation elements;
- Stairways, staircases, elevators, and dumbwaiters;
- Unpainted drywall walls and ceilings, including fiberglass insulation; and
- Cleanup.

**Myth:** You can't buy flood insurance unless you are located in a high-flood-risk area.

**Fact:** You can buy flood insurance no matter where you live, as long as your community participates in the NFIP. The NFIP makes federally backed flood insurance available to property owners, renters, and businesses in eligible communities. **There is, however, a 30-day waiting period after you buy flood**
insurance before the policy is effective.

Flood insurance provides limited coverage up to $1,000 for expenses incurred trying to protect insured property from flood damage, such as sandbagging. Homeowners should check with their agents regarding eligibility.

Get The Facts

Homeowners, condo owners, renters and business owners should read their flood insurance policies carefully and discuss their policies with their insurance agents to make sure they understand what is and is not covered. They should also make sure they have all required permits before repairing or rebuilding. More information on flood insurance is available on the Internet at www.floodsmart.gov, or by calling toll-free 1-888-275-6347 or TTY 1-800-427-5593.

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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.

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