SBA DECLARES DISASTER AREA FOR 13 FLORIDA COUNTIES
ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOANS NOW AVAILABLE

MIAMI/JACKSONVILLE, FL - As a result of freezing temperatures that occurred beginning November 2002 and continuing through February 2003, small businesses and small agricultural cooperatives located in Bay, Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Citrus, Dade, Duval, Franklin, Gulf, Hillsborough, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Taylor Counties and the contiguous Counties of Baker, Calhoun, Clay, Collier, DeSoto, Dixie, Escambia, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Indian River, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lee, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Manatee, Marion, Monroe, Nassau, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota, Seminole, St. Johns, Sumter, Volusia, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington in the State of Florida; and Covington and Escambia Counties in the State of Alabama are now eligible for low-interest economic injury disaster loan assistance from the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Disaster Assistance Program, according to SBA Disaster Area Director Michael C. Allen.

“These loan funds are meant to provide working capital to small businesses and small agricultural cooperatives, affected by this disaster, to help them pay their bills and continue to meet normal operating expenses until business returns to pre-disaster normal conditions. Farmers are not eligible to apply to the SBA,” Allen said.

According to Allen, loans of up to $1.5 million are available to small businesses and small agricultural cooperatives that had a significant economic impact caused by the freezing temperatures. These loans can be written for up to a 30 year term at a low 3.324 percent interest rate. Actual loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each applicant’s financial condition.

Loan applications and program information are available by calling SBA toll-free at 1-800-359-2227. The Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) and speech impaired number is (404) 347-3751. These telephones are answered Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Eastern. Applications are also available by writing: Area 2 – Disaster Assistance Office, U. S. Small Business Administration, One Baltimore Place – Suite 300, Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

The deadline for all economic injury applications is January 2, 2004.

Information about the disaster program is available on SBA’s homepage at www.sba.gov