Careful Use of Disaster Checks Advised by State and Federal Officials

MIAMI – Federal and state officials advise those who have received disaster-assistance funds to use the money carefully. Checks are being mailed to help eligible applicants recover from the March 27 severe storms and tornadoes.

“It is our responsibility to help people in need and, at the same time, to make sure that the taxpayers’ money is spent correctly,” said Justo Hernandez of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the federal coordinating officer for the recovery effort.

“Disaster funds cover basic needs only,” added the deputy state coordinating officer, Charles Speights of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “They help people get back on their feet, but cannot compensate for their entire loss.”

**Housing Assistance funds may be used for:**
- Repairs to return the home to a safe and functional condition – These may include repairs to windows, doors, water and ventilation systems, or other structural parts of a home.
- Reimbursement for hotel or motel lodging expenses directly related to the disaster – Receipts for these expenses will be requested.
- Short-term housing – Applicants who must remain in temporary housing for a longer period than the check covers may request more assistance until their home can be re-occupied or other permanent housing arrangements can be made.

**Other Needs Assistance funds may be used for:**
- Medical and dental expenses
- Personal property, specialized tools, household items, appliances, vehicle repair or other serious needs.

If you have registered with FEMA but have questions about your application for disaster assistance, call 1-800-621-3362 (TTY 1-800-462-7585 for the speech- and hearing-impaired) or visit the Disaster Recover Center at Caleb Center, 3rd Floor, 5400 NW 22nd Ave., Liberty City.

To report fraud, waste or abuse of FEMA programs call toll free 1-800-323-8603.