GOVERNOR BUSH REQUESTS PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION TO AID VICTIMS OF THE TORNADO IN PALM BEACH COUNTY
~Relief sought for individuals and businesses impacted by last week’s tornado~

Tallahassee- Governor Jeb Bush today signed a letter to President George Bush requesting that Palm Beach County be declared a major disaster area as a result of the tornado and severe weather that occurred in Palm Beach County on August 7, 2003.

The request, through Kenneth O. Burris, regional director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is seeking the Individual Assistance (IA) Programs; including the Individuals and Households Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Disaster Legal Services and the Small Business Administration Disaster Loans Program for Palm Beach County, and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for the entire state of Florida.

“This tornado has impacted the lives of many Palm Beach County residents,” said Gov. Jeb Bush. “The Individual Assistance dollars that are being requested will go a long way in helping residents and businesses to recover from this disaster.”

The federal request is based upon preliminary damage assessments conducted by federal, state and local officials in Palm Beach County and the City of Riviera Beach. The letter also catalogues a series of events involving severe weather and continuous rainfall that has impacted 25 counties in the state since June.

“Based on our review of the unmet needs, and with the support of both city and county officials, we applaud the Governor’s decision to go forward with this request,” said Craig Fugate, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “The Palm Beach tornado is just one more event, in a series of severe weather events, that has taken its toll on cities, counties, residents and relief agencies across the entire state.”

Federal damage figures show 236 structures impacted, 28 with major damage, and 33 structures destroyed in Palm Beach County and the City of Riviera Beach. Since May 28, 2003, Florida counties are reporting a total of 1635 structures impacted, with 153 having received major damage and 53 destroyed statewide.

For more information on federal assistance programs please go to www.fema.gov. The Florida Division of Emergency Management Website is: www.floridadisaster.org

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