

Press Release

PUBLIC MEETING AND FINAL CALL FOR FEMA HAZARD MITIGATION or “BUY-OUT” PARTICIPANTS

Property Owners Whose Primary Residences were Destroyed or Substantially Damaged by Either Hurricane Irene or Tropical Storm Lee Must Attend December 15 Meeting at 7:00pm; December 30 for Deadline for Grant Application

On Thursday, December 15, 2011, the Susquehanna County Emergency Management Agency will hold a meeting for all individuals and families whose primary residence was either destroyed or substantially damaged by Hurricane Irene or Tropical Storm Lee and want to participate in FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), more commonly known as the “buy-out” program.

Qualified individuals or families should have recently been identified to the County by their local municipality for inclusion in the HMGP Letter of Intent (LOI) sent to PEMA last month. The County was notified by PEMA that its letter had been approved and that the County could submit a full HMGP application on behalf of its impacted residents. This will be the third HMGP application the County has submitted since June 2006; the two previous applications were successfully funded for nearly \$1,000,000.00, acquiring and demolishing a total of 13 properties. “We hope to continue our successful run in having our grant applications fully funded and being able to provide critical resources for our residents at a time when they are truly hurting” said Charlene Moser, Susquehanna County Emergency Management Coordinator.

The meeting will begin at 7:00pm, will last approximately 90 minutes, and it is mandatory that all interested participants attend. “At this meeting, we will work with each property owners to complete critical paperwork that must be included in the HMGP application being sent to PEMA and FEMA prior to the December 30, 2011 deadline,” explained Moser. If a resident’s paperwork is not part of the complete package prepared by the County, that particular property owner risks their participation in the grant program.

Only homes that served as the primary residence for an individual or family that were “substantially damaged” or destroyed by either Hurricane Irene or Tropical Storm Lee are eligible for funds. Again, a “substantially damaged” property has sustained damage equal to 50 percent or more of the pre-flood, fair market value of the property in a single flood event.

Any property acquired under the HMGP, by law, must be cleared of all structures, and a deed restriction requiring the lot be maintained as open space in perpetuity will be placed against the property. No new insurable structures may be built upon the land, and no disaster assistance can ever be sought for the property again. Additionally, the County’s Disaster Recovery Specialist, Donna Erat, stresses “contrary to any false rumors swirling around the County, land acquired through FEMA’s program may not, under any circumstances, be leased by or to any party for gas or mineral rights exploration.” Immediately following the acquisition of a property from a homeowner, FEMA turns the title for the land over to the local unit of government, which becomes responsible for maintaining the land, including enforcing the deed restrictions and open space requirements.

The meeting will be held in the County Emergency Management Agency’s Emergency Operations Center, in the basement of the County Office Building (rear of the building). The County Office Building is located at 81 Public Avenue, in Montrose.

For more information about the HMGP, or to add a property to the County’s grant application, please contact Charlene Moser, Susquehanna County Emergency Management Coordinator, at 278-4600, ext 257.