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STATE, FEMA MOVING RECOVERY PROCESS FORWARD

OLYMPIA – Currently, 2,384 Washington state residents have called the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA’s) toll-free registration number to ask for disaster recovery assistance, federal officials said. On Tuesday, Dec. 11, the first housing assistance check for \$1,740 was issued to a homeowner in Grays Harbor County.

“FEMA appreciates the frustrations and concerns of disaster survivors, and we want to assure people that the recovery process is moving forward,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Tom Davies. “There have been 10 housing assistance payments so far. We’ve received 1,359 housing inspection requests and are actively responding to them.”

Davies reminded disaster survivors in Lewis and Grays Harbor Counties they can register with FEMA for assistance by calling **1-800-621-3362 (FEMA)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week. People who are hearing or speech impaired can call the TTY 1-800-462-7585. Disaster survivors can also register by going online at www.fema.gov.

“The telephone registration process has been in operation since Lewis and Grays Harbor Counties were designated for Individual Assistance on Sunday,” said Davies. “FEMA is setting up a Joint Field Office to administer recovery programs with the state in Lacey, Washington. This facility is not for public or registrations purposes. FEMA staff have been coordinating closely with state officials since Dec. 1, before the storms and flooding hit.”

Citizens who suffered storm damage in counties that are still seeking an Individual Assistance designation from FEMA are advised to contact their local emergency manager or city officials to report those damages.

President Bush declared a disaster for Individual Assistance in Grays Harbor and Lewis Counties and authorized disaster Public Assistance for cleanup and emergency response costs in six Counties—Grays Harbor, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Thurston.

“We are working closely with FEMA on completing surveys of storm and flood damage to see if more counties can be added to last weekend’s disaster declarations,” said Kurt Hardin, state coordinating officer for the December storm and flooding disaster. “These surveys will cover most of Western Washington and will be completed by the weekend. Based on those results, the state may be able to request the addition of more counties early next week.”

The survey teams consist of state and FEMA Public Assistance program staff, FEMA hazard mitigation staff, FEMA environmental staff, if needed, and local jurisdiction staff. The state/FEMA teams meet local emergency management representatives in their jurisdictions to survey damages together. The teams will be assessing damages to homes, businesses (for Individual Assistance) and public infrastructure such as roads and buildings (for Public Assistance).

In the meantime, people with needs for immediate assistance can call the American Red Cross at 866-GET-INFO.

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