



# NEWS RELEASE

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## *SBA HONORS OUTSTANDING DISASTER RECOVERY EFFORTS*

**WASHINGTON** – A Pennsylvania small business owner, a volunteer from Louisiana, an insurance company and a North Dakota public official who played major roles in the disaster recovery of their communities were honored today by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The “Phoenix Awards” were presented during a ceremony at the Renaissance Washington Hotel, one of many events to be held during SBA’s annual Small Business Week Celebration. Since 1998, the agency has acknowledged the efforts of disaster survivors who not only refused to be crushed by the personal and financial loss that arrives on the heels of a natural disaster, but found ways to help others clean up the mess and rebuild their lives.

Benjamin Breskman was awarded the 2001 Small Business Phoenix Award for his leadership in rebuilding his Sentry Paint Technologies plant after Hurricane Floyd struck in September 1999. The flood that followed sent 17 feet of water into his building in Darby, Pa., causing more than \$2.7 million in damages. Breskman and his 18 employees managed to keep the business running while rebuilding. An SBA disaster loan allowed him to continue the reconstruction and Breskman was able to keep his customers happy.

The Phoenix Award for outstanding volunteer contribution to disaster recovery went to James Woods, a Shreveport, La., attorney who put his practice on hold after tornadoes struck the area last April. He rented chain saws to handle tree removals, organized a volunteer crew, prepared detailed property damage reports for more than 200 Shreveport residents and used his own money to buy tarps for the homes that suffered roof damage.

Since 1974, Douglas C. Friez has worked on behalf of disaster victims in North Dakota, coordinating response and recovery efforts with state and federal agencies for the North Dakota Division of Emergency Management. Friez, now the agency’s state director, received the Phoenix Award for his outstanding work as a public official.

When Hurricane Floyd devastated 10 Eastern seaboard states in September 1999, Allstate Insurance Company’s Illinois-based National Catastrophe Team sprang into action. Allstate representatives staffed mobile response units—36 foot custom fitted offices on wheels—and quickly went to work assessing damages, processing claims and writing checks to policy owners. Within three months, 90 percent of the Hurricane Floyd claims had closed.

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The SBA makes disaster loans to homeowners, renters and non-farm businesses of all sizes. Homeowners may borrow up to \$200,000 to repair or replace damaged real estate. Individuals may borrow up to \$40,000 to cover losses to personal property.

Non-farm businesses and non-profit organizations of any size may apply for up to \$1.5 million to repair or replace business assets. Small businesses that suffered economic losses may apply for a working capital loan of up to \$1.5 million, even if the property was not physically damaged.

During fiscal year 2000, SBA made over \$1 billion in disaster loans to more than 28,000 homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes.

To find out more about SBA's disaster assistance program, visit the web site at [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster).

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