



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Carol Chastang (202) 205-6987
Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/news>

Homeowners, Renters and Businesses Are Urged To Prepare Before Hurricane Season Hits

WASHINGTON – With the six-month Atlantic Hurricane Season beginning June 1, the U.S. Small Business Administration is urging homeowners, renters and businesses to take steps to protect their lives and property before the storms hit.

The National Hurricane Center and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration have designated May 15-21 as National Hurricane Preparedness Week in an effort to make the public aware of ways to diminish the devastation caused by these storms. Information about hurricane forecasts and tracking, as well as safety tips to use once a hurricane is forecast is available on the Web site at <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>.

Making sure your home or business property is less vulnerable by identifying possible hazards, developing a plan which includes establishing escape routes and keeping emergency phone numbers handy, keeping copies of important business and personal records off-site as well as having appropriate insurance coverage are critical disaster preparedness strategies suggested by the SBA.

More preparedness tips for businesses, homeowners and renters are available on the SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/disaster_recov/prepared/getready.html. The Institute for Business and Home Safety (www.disastersafety.org) also has information on protecting your home or business. The federal government's preparedness Web site www.ready.gov is another helpful resource.

In the aftermath of last summer's hurricanes that caused billions of dollars in losses in Florida and 12 other states, the SBA approved more than \$2 billion in disaster loans to about 63,000 residents and businesses. Many property owners experienced damage from flooding caused by storm surges. Those losses were not covered by most insurance policies.

"While the SBA is always ready to help homeowners and entrepreneurs rebuild after a disaster," said SBA administrator Hector V. Barreto, "millions in taxpayer dollars can be saved when flood losses are covered by insurance."

Nearly 20,000 communities across the United States and its territories participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the NFIP makes federally backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters and businesses in those communities.

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Purchasing appropriate insurance coverage is a good way to finance recovery from hurricanes. It's also a good idea to buy flood insurance as soon as possible, since it normally takes 30 days for the policy to go into effect.

The SBA makes low-interest loans to homeowners, renters and non-farm businesses of all sizes following a disaster declaration by the President. 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 disaster damaged business assets and real property. Small businesses that suffered economic losses as a direct result of the declared disaster may apply for a working capital loan of up to \$1.5 million, even if the property was not physically damaged.

To learn more about the SBA's disaster assistance program and links to additional disaster preparedness tips, visit the Web site at www.sba.gov/disaster.

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

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