

FEMA Assures Storm Victims Regarding Acceptance of Aid

Some Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims are concerned that receiving federal or state hurricane relief aid will add to their income, resulting in the loss of Medicaid, welfare assistance or food stamps. Hurricane victims also fear that acceptance of hurricane aid will result in the loss of social security benefits, higher taxes and the loss of income-based programs.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP) assure storm victims that a state or federal grant does not add to taxable income and will not affect federal/state benefits.

FEMA and LOHSEP encourage all disaster victims to apply for assistance and complete the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan application, if it is sent to them. If SBA is unable to approve a loan, the applicant may be referred to Other Needs Assistance (ONA) which covers items such as personal property loss, medical care, and transportation. Call SBA at 1-800-659-2955 or visit www.sba.gov disaster for additional information.

Disaster victims can call FEMA to find out more about housing grants and other programs at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 1-800-462-7585 for the speech or hearing impaired. Lines are open 24 hours a day seven days a week until further notice. Victims may also register online at www.fema.gov or register at any Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

For elderly issues, contact Eldercare Locators at 1-800-677-1116.

[Source: <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=21558>] Dec. 17, 2005