

Christie Administration Announces Extension of FEMA Transitional Sheltering Assistance Program

Sandy-Displaced Families Can Receive Assistance Through March 22, 2013

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Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration today announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Transitional Sheltering Assistance (TSA) Program has been extended at the Administration's request for an additional 14 days to the end of March 22, 2013. The extension means eligible households can receive TSA assistance through March 22 with a check-out date of March 23, 2013.

"Many of our Sandy-displaced families remain in need of assistance as they continue to locate a more permanent housing solution," said Governor Christie. "I thank FEMA for their continued recognition of the challenges and continued needs faced by these families, as well as their work with my Administration to ensure they have the relief they need. The extension will give these families additional time to work out a housing solution that meets their needs."

FEMA activated its Transitional Sheltering Assistance program in the immediate aftermath of Superstorm Sandy at New Jersey's request. The program allows eligible survivors who cannot return to their homes because of damage caused by the storm to stay in participating hotels or motels until more suitable housing is available. Individuals and households in the program had to register with FEMA for assistance; pass identity verification; and demonstrate that they are displaced from a primary residence located in a geographic area that is designated for TSA.

"By continuing our work with FEMA, the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the American Red Cross, and county welfare agencies, we've been able to help find permanent housing solutions and reduce the number of families needing TSA assistance by nearly half, from 1300 on February 7 to approximately 675 today," said New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Richard E. Constable, III. "This extension will help us continue that work and find safe, appropriate housing solutions that meet the needs of the remaining families."

In approving this latest TSA extension, FEMA set forth more stringent conditions for eligibility. Households are not eligible for extension if they have previously checked out of TSA hotels, their caseworkers recommend they not be extended, or they received housing assistance from a county program before Superstorm Sandy hit. Also, new families will not be eligible for the program unless FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer for New Jersey or his designee approves eligibility based on an extraordinary circumstance.

To help displaced families locate permanent housing, the DCA has partnered with the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency and with the non-profit organization Socialserve.com to frequently update and add new rental listings to the New Jersey Housing Resource Center, which is a free service at www.NJHRC.gov for people in search of affordable housing and for landlords who are looking to provide housing.

Owners of rental housing – be it furnished or unfurnished, with short-term leases or long-term leases – are urged to list available rental units on the Housing Resource Center. FEMA and relief workers are using the online site everyday to aid storm survivors locate housing. Landlords are also encouraged to adjust lease terms if needed to accommodate displaced families.

As of yesterday, approximately 675 Sandy-displaced New Jersey residents are being housed through the TSA program.

Individuals who have questions regarding their eligibility should contact the FEMA helpline at 1-800-621-3362 (FEMA).

To register with FEMA, call the phone number listed above or visit www.disasterassistance.gov on the Internet.