



State requests joint damage assessment from U.S. Small Business Administration in wake of December tornadoes

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SPRINGFIELD - The state of Illinois continues to seek ways to support recovery efforts in Christian County after a late season tornado outbreak tore through central Illinois. Today, state officials requested the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to conduct a joint preliminary damage assessment of the tornado damage in Christian County. Local, state and federal officials will participate in the assessment, which is the next step in the long road to recovery for Christian County residents and business owners impacted by the December 1 storms.

Local officials spent a considerable amount of time and effort on documenting damages to homes and businesses. The county's initial assessment submitted to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) found 137 homes that were destroyed or sustained major damage, with more than 500 other homes receiving less severe damage. While there is no doubt this is a significant number of homes for the county, history has shown us that these numbers will not meet the criteria for a major federal disaster declaration.

"Storm survivors deserve an expedited recovery process so they can begin to rebuild their lives," said Governor Rauner. "The current federal criteria does not benefit small town disasters in big states. The residents of Christian County need immediate assistance. An SBA declaration would expedite assistance to people and businesses."

In order to qualify for an SBA declaration, at least 25 homes and/or businesses in a county must sustain major, uninsured losses of 40-percent or more. If approved, an SBA declaration would pave the way for low-interest, long-term loans for homeowners, renters and business owners. SBA loans can help repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters would also be eligible to apply for loans to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property. Businesses and private non-profit

organizations would be eligible to apply for loans to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets.

“The SBA loan program was created by Congress to ensure that those affected by unforeseen catastrophic events, such as tornadoes and hurricanes, can recover with as little adverse impact as possible,” said Acting IEMA Director William Robertson. “I want to thank Governor Rauner and our congressional delegation for their commitment to ensuring these residents get back on their feet following these devastating storms.”

Once the joint preliminary damage assessment is complete, the SBA will forward its findings to officials with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. At that time, the results will be reviewed with Christian County officials and a determination will be made on the best steps forward.