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State of Florida Receives Denial Notification of Individual Assistance for Southwest Florida Tornadoes, Plans to Appeal

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) received notification from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that the State’s request for Individual Assistance for Floridians impacted by recent tornadoes in Charlotte and Lee counties was denied. FDEM plans to appeal this decision, due to the amount of destruction and displaced residents caused by the tornadoes. FDEM is also identifying other forms of disaster assistance that may be available. The decision letter is available [here](#).

“While we begin the decision appeal process, I want to reassure Floridians that the Division is committed to supporting recovery efforts,” said **FDEM Director Kevin Guthrie**. “We’ll continue to work with our local and federal partners to provide relief to impacted residents and ensure all types of disaster assistance is made available.”

On January 24, the State requested all programs under [Individual Assistance](#). This includes the Individuals and Households program, Disaster Case Management, Crisis Counseling and Training program, Disaster Legal Services and Disaster Unemployment Assistance. The request is available [here](#).

During a series of severe storms early morning January 16, a confirmed EF-1 tornado touched down in Charlotte County. Soon after, a confirmed EF-2 tornado touched down in Lee County.

The victims of this disaster represent a significant elderly population, with 84 percent of the impacted population receiving Social Security Income. At the time of the request, power and water was still being restored to impacted areas and many households were unable to have utilities reconnected due to broken pipes.

Immediately following the tornadoes, FDEM deployed disaster recovery staff into impacted counties to conduct Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments with county officials, FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration. These assessments determined 158 homes were destroyed or sustained major damage.

During these assessments, the State discovered that some survivors were forced to stay with neighbors to remain near their damaged homes. With a high percentage of both older adults and destroyed homes, there is a risk of decline in this specific population because of displacement and unstable housing.

To assist with the recovery process, Governor DeSantis issued [Executive Order 22-17](#), declaring a State of Emergency for Charlotte and Lee counties.

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