

## Application Deadline For Disaster Assistance Extended To January 19

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ORLANDO , Fla. -- The deadline for Florida residents affected by Hurricane Wilma to apply for federal/state disaster assistance has been extended to Thursday, January 19 , say officials from the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Florida 's State Emergency Response Team (SERT).

"We want to make sure every Floridian has had the opportunity to apply and receive the assistance for which he or she is eligible," Justin DeMello, federal coordinating officer, said. "Don't prejudge yourself, all and apply by January 19."

The first step in applying for aid is to register with FEMA. There are two ways to register: Log on to [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), or call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 1-800-462-7585 for those with speech or hearing impairments. Both lines are available 24/7. Residents are urged to register for assistance only once; registering multiple times may cause delays in the assistance process.

"The state team is committed to working with our federal partners in meeting the needs of Floridians who were affected by Hurricane Wilma," Craig Fugate, state coordinating officer, said. "Extending the deadline ensures that we can be as thorough as possible in this vital endeavor."

Those who suffered losses from the hurricane have a variety of assistance programs available to them as they seek to recover in the storm's aftermath. Individual Assistance can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other disaster-related expenses not covered by insurance or other aid programs . Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are also available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. Grants do not have to be repaid, but loans from the SBA must be repaid.

To be considered for such aid, individuals must have sustained losses or damage from Hurricane Wilma and reside in a county that has been designated eligible for Individual Assistance programs. The following counties have been designated: Brevard, Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Indian River, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe , Okeechobee, Palm Beach , and St. Lucie.