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ISLANDWIDE

FEMA OKs \$285M for Sandy victims

More than \$285 million in cash assistance has been approved for residents of Nassau and Suffolk counties a month after superstorm Sandy, federal officials said yesterday.

The assistance is part of \$703 million paid in 13 New York State counties, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

FEMA has approved \$234.8 million for Nassau residents and \$51.1 million for Suffolk, FEMA officials said.

Finding "available housing" for victims whose homes were damaged by Sandy, which hit Long Island on Oct. 29, is the agency's top priority, said Terry Winters, FEMA's disaster response coordinator for Nassau and Suffolk counties.

"We just don't have the rental resources or available space to build a temporary community," Winters said. "Finding a solution to temporary housing has been a bit of a challenge."

Winters yesterday said he couldn't provide an estimate of how many homes on Long Island had been destroyed by Sandy.

So far, more than 236,000 New Yorkers have contacted FEMA or registered for assistance.

Individuals can register online for FEMA assistance at disasterassistance.gov or call 800-621-3362. Multilingual telephone operators are available and those with a speech disability or hearing loss can use a TTY by calling 800-462-7585.

Toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

— KEITH HERBERT

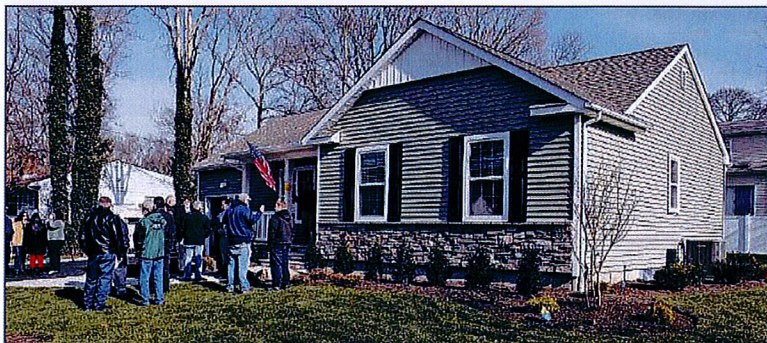
LONG BEACH

Schools amend vacation schedules

Long Beach's school district has amended its vacation schedule to make up for school days lost to superstorm Sandy.

Homecoming for war veteran

LAKE RONKONKOMA. Iraq War veteran and Purple Heart recipient Sgt. Ryan Donnelly stands with fiancée Tina McGory on the front steps of his new home yesterday. The Marine's right leg was partially amputated after the vehicle he was in hit an improvised explosive device in Iraq in 2005. The donated home was built by the Long Island Home Builders Care Development Corp. on land donated by the Town of Brookhaven. The home was built to accommodate Donnelly.



Many of the district's middle-schoolers, who have been going to school at Long Beach High School, will also return to their normal building next week, a district spokeswoman said.

Long Beach schools will hold classes Feb. 19-22, which had been set aside as winter recess days, the spokeswoman said.

Classes also will take place March 25 and April 1, which had been designated as spring recess days, she said. The March 27 and 28 spring recess days have been designated as possible snow makeup days, she said.

Superintendent David Weiss said the decision to cut vacation days was a difficult one.

"You'd like to make decisions between good options, but sometimes you have to make decisions between bad options," Weiss said.

The district's sixth- and seventh-graders will return to the middle school building on

Monday, the spokeswoman said. Eighth-graders are scheduled to be back by Dec. 19, she said.

The temporary loss of the middle school, which suffered storm damage, caused crowding issues at the high school, Weiss said.

"They worked through as best as they could," Weiss said.

— PATRICK WHITTLE

BROOKHAVEN TOWN

Free debris collection continues in towns

Brookhaven Town is continuing to collect superstorm Sandy-related debris from Suffolk County and several other Long Island towns, but will not immediately charge fees.

The town started collecting trees and branches Nov. 6,

with much of the debris coming from Suffolk County and the towns of Smithtown, Southampton and Riverhead, among other municipalities, Brookhaven officials said.

The county has supplied Brookhaven with three air curtain burners to help process the debris, which is being collected at the Yaphank landfill, town officials said.

Brookhaven normally charges \$75 per ton of debris collected. Since the storm struck, it has taken in 38,000 tons of debris, some of which has come from the town itself, officials said.

Brookhaven Town will either charge the respective towns or seek reimbursement from FEMA once the debris collection has concluded. After Tropical Storm Irene, Brookhaven did not charge any fees until FEMA reimbursed the towns for their damage costs, officials said.

— DEON J. HAMPTON

OCEANSIDE

Meeting focuses on rebuilding

More than 400 Oceanside and Island Park residents attended a town-hall meeting Wednesday at Oceanside High School to find out the steps they need to take to rebuild their homes in the wake of Sandy.

Hempstead Town officials answered questions and provided information about the permit process, their efforts to conduct door-to-door home inspections pertaining to structural safety, and help available through mobile offices.

As part of the storm-recovery effort, the building department is waiving all permit fees for structural repairs and temporary housing trailers for residents, officials said. The town is also waiving building variance requirements for town residents who want to rebuild their homes at higher elevations to meet FEMA flood standards.

Building department planning examiners have established mobile offices to answer residents' questions, provide permit applications and discuss regulations. The mobile office will be in Oceanside Park on Wednesday from noon to 6 p.m.

Senior Councilman Anthony Santino said the town helped Sanitary District 7, which serves Oceanside, because it couldn't handle the collection of more than 50 million pounds of debris. He also said more than 2,500 trees were downed in town, including about 165 trees in Oceanside.

But Oceanside resident Ellen Kornfield Fogel said she was not happy with what she said was a slow response from government officials immediately after the storm. Much of Oceanside didn't have power for more than two weeks and mounds of trash piled up on curbs for more than a week until residents held a rally three weeks ago.

"I don't understand why we need to have rallies to have people listen to us," Fogel said.

— AISHA AL-MUSLIM

DAVIS PARK

Water supply safe to drink

The water supply in Davis Park is now safe to drink, be-