

**Originally appeared on News-Journal Online at**

[http://www.news-](http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/Local/newEAST01060309.htm)

[journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/Local/newEAST01060309.htm](http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/Local/newEAST01060309.htm)

| [Print This Page](#)  
| [Close This Page](#)

June 03, 2009

May floods 3rd costliest storm event in Volusia

By EILEEN ZAFFIRO  
Staff Writer

DAYTONA BEACH -- The storm that started dumping rain across Central Florida on May 17 and didn't relent for a week never got a name, but it's still going down in the history books.

The deluge that swallowed neighborhoods and streamed into homes racked up \$68.6 million in damages and expenses, the third most costly weather disaster in Volusia County in at least the last 16 years.

Since local officials started keeping records on severe weather costs in 1993, only Hurricane Frances and Hurricane Charley were more expensive, tallying \$394 million and \$107 million in damages and expenses, respectively.

That storm news came in a flurry of facts and figures shared Tuesday morning in a room packed with local, state and federal officials gathered to talk about last month's floods.

Pats on the back were also in abundant supply at the meeting.

"Volusia County has done its job," said Ruben Almaguer, interim director of Florida's Division of Emergency Management. "It has gone very well here. The response to this event has been phenomenal."

Jeff Bryant, a federal coordinating officer with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, also had high praise.

"Every disaster begins and ends locally," Bryant said.

The gathering of elected leaders and local government employees also focused on the federal assistance beginning to flow into the area.

Only Volusia County is receiving individual federal assistance, the type of help that goes to homeowners and renters whose homes and belongings were damaged.

So far, 2,600 people have registered for FEMA aid, and \$3 million in assistance has been approved. Families can receive up to \$30,300 each in FEMA help, Bryant said.

The damage Flagler County has reported so far is not sufficient to qualify for individual federal assistance, said Doug Wright, recovery bureau chief with the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Flagler County officials would have to identify additional damage to be considered, Wright said.

But public federal assistance, which would go to local governments that need to fix roads, public buildings and other infrastructure, could soon be on the way for a few area counties, including Volusia and Flagler, Bryant said.

With all the standing water that only recently receded, the money could also be used for mosquito control if the problem becomes a public health hazard. Volusia County officials have done helicopter and fog truck spraying, but officials say they need help with aerial spraying over the whole county to expedite control over "the enormous broods of mosquitoes." Mosquito complaints jumped from more than 70 calls on Sunday to more than 400 calls Monday.

The chances of getting those federal dollars for governments looks good, and could be OK'd by the end of the week, Bryant said. There isn't a cap for the amount of money governments can receive, he said.

If area counties do qualify for FEMA's public assistance help, they would not receive money up front. They would have to do work first, then ask for reimbursement, he said.

The federal government would cover 75 percent of costs for eligible government projects; the state would chip in 12.5 percent and local governments would cover the remaining 12.5 percent, Bryant said.

Drainage improvement projects are likely to be on local governments' wish lists, something state Sen. Evelyn Lynn asked about at Tuesday's meeting. Lynn said local, state and federal officials need to talk about reworking the Nova Road canal system. Bryant said he'd explore the idea.

While federal help is getting plenty of attention, Volusia County has also received \$1 million from the Florida Housing Finance Corporation for disaster housing assistance.

In addition, state representatives Dorothy Hukill and Dwayne Taylor have asked the governor to activate the Emergency Bridge Loan Program that provides low-interest business loans.

Another source of help is the Daytona Beach Housing Authority, which is giving each head of household in the Caroline Village complex \$500 and waiving rent payments for June.

[eileen.zaffiro@news-jrn.com](mailto:eileen.zaffiro@news-jrn.com)

## **FEMA ASSISTANCE**

Residents and business owners who sustained losses in Volusia County can continue to apply for FEMA assistance today by registering online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](http://DisasterAssistance.gov) or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA(3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech-impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers will operate from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

## **SERVICE CENTERS**

FEMA assistance centers also are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at the Dickerson Center, 308 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Daytona Beach and at the Holly Hill Community Recreation Center, 1046 Daytona Ave.

Take Social Security number, household income information, a list of property damage and insurance information.

---

© 2009 News-Journal Corporation. ® www.news-journalonline.com. Do not republish or distribute without permission.