

Weatherization Program Notice 93-12

Effective Date - July 28, 1993

SUBJECT: DISASTER RELIEF

PURPOSE: To provide guidance to Support Offices and States relative to procedures in handling major disasters affecting Weatherization program activities.

SCOPE: The provisions of this guidance apply to all grantees applying for financial assistance under the Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program.

BACKGROUND: We have been asked in the wake of disastrous flooding across the mid-west to provide guidance on activities that may be performed using weatherization funds and labor resources. The Department of Energy's mission under the Federal Response Plan is to facilitate the restoration of energy systems in the area affected by the flood. The Department's long-term objectives under the plan include contributing its resources and funding to assist private citizens and businesses in the post-flood reconstruction effort.

INTERIM POLICY: For weatherization purposes, a disaster is determined by a Presidential or Gubernatorial order declaring either a Federal or State Emergency. The crisis generally will involve three phases: the crisis itself, the clean-up, and rebuilding of the area. It is not uncommon for weatherization work to be suspended during the crisis and early clean-up period until community services such as electricity, water, food and medical supply activities can be returned to normal. The disaster time period may be from several days to a month or more and this period can have a critical impact on program operations. Since disasters create many problems and opportunities in furthering energy efficiency goals, the Weatherization Office has traditionally supported use of weatherization workers in normalization activities.

Support Office Directors are authorized to exercise discretionary authority in interpreting the weatherization rules and grant conditions in order to implement the most appropriate responses to ameliorate the effects of the disaster and serve the public interest. Likewise, States should fashion prudent disaster response plans which not only address the needs of the affected low-income clients, but take into consideration the limited funds available in the program.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Reweathering - The rule allows any home damaged by flood to be reweatherized, without regard to date of weatherization, if the damage to materials is not covered by insurance.
2. Health and safety - The rule allows a State to develop a health and safety plan to address the needs of low-income occupants of eligible homes. A State will be required to develop an addendum or revision to its current plan to address issues related specifically to a disaster, such as extensive flood damage. Such activities may include emergency clean-up activities in eligible homes or in public areas that benefit low-income clients. For example, weatherization crews may be assigned to authorized

emergency crews to remove debris from local low-income housing areas as a health and safety measure. Similarly, such crews may be assigned to more wide-ranging activities, such as filling sandbags, since such activities are directly related to protection of all the housing in an area, including low-income. Weatherization participation should be proportionate to the overall effort where possible. In the case of extensive flood damage, States should consult with utilities and other State and local officials relative to the safe inspection and operation of heating and cooling equipment that may have been damaged.

3. Technical Assistance - The rule permits the States to use technical assistance funds in flexible ways to achieve energy efficiency goals of the program. For example, this may be an appropriate time to use weatherization funds to assist local housing agencies to focus on energy efficiency designs as their rehabilitation efforts take place.
4. Leveraging - The rule permits States to take funds off the top of their grants to provide leveraging opportunities at the State and local levels. Grantees should be encouraged to seek innovative ways of using these funds to increase the energy related assistance that can be made available to people facing the prospect of rebuilding after the disaster.

PROCEDURES: As soon as practical after the declaration of a disaster, Support Office Directors will contact the weatherization officials in the affected States and inform them of flexible options for the Weatherization Program. Verbal agreements will be made to expedite early action. However, States desiring to take advantage of the weatherization activities to help disaster victims should submit to the appropriate Support Office a summary plan of action as soon as possible. Support Office weatherization contacts and contracting officers may then provide States with guidance on how to quickly proceed. Written plan amendments should be submitted by a mutually agreed date.

Where disaster plans are submitted, Support Offices should keep Headquarters advised of progress. Grant amendments for the purpose of emergency activities should include brief special reporting requirements to describe the nature and scope of activities; time frame of the activities; cost of the activities; estimates of the number of persons or dwellings assisted; and other items as determined by the Support Office. Headquarters should be contacted as needed and will expedite resolution of any issues as required by the Support Office Director.

The Weatherization Assistance Program Division will begin work later this fall on a more comprehensive policy concerning the full range of emergency and disaster issues.

Jeanne Van Vlandren, Director
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