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New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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TO: Commissioners, TA Directors, FS Directors

FROM: Elizabeth R. Berlin, Executive Deputy Commissioner

SUBJECT: Disaster Preparedness

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: Food Stamp Bureau at 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-1469; TA Bureau at 1-800-343-8859, extension 4-9344

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has declared a state of emergency in New York in preparation for the potential impact of Hurricane Irene, which may hit New York State this coming weekend.

We are issuing this GIS to alert districts of emergency protocols that may be initiated to deal with any ensuing crisis situations.

Food Stamps

Operation of a Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program (DFSBP) would require prior federal authorization. To be fully prepared for that possibility, districts should review their responsibilities under the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program, as described in the document at the following link:

<http://otda.state.nyenet/dta/FS/FSDisasBenProg.pdf>

We are in close contact with the USDA/FNS Northeast Regional Office and they are ready to provide assistance. We will pass along to you any updated information from them as it is provided.

In accordance with the New York State OTDA Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program, reaction to disasters in New York State is the direct responsibility of local governments and municipalities. Under DFSBP local districts have the primary responsibility of meeting the emergency food needs of disaster victims. Also alerted are State forces, mobilized through the State Office of Emergency Management (SOEM).

During a disaster the normal methods of providing food stamp benefits may be disrupted and the number of individuals applying may increase significantly. The issuance of Disaster Food Stamp Benefits (DFSFB) is solely contingent upon **prior authorization** by

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USDA. NYS OTDA is monitoring the situation closely and will provide districts with updated information and direction as events evolve.

Because individuals may experience food loss due to the effects of a storm from damage and/or resulting power outages, this GIS also serves to:

- Reinforce and clarify the temporary assistance and food stamp policies that local districts must have in place to deal with loss of food in emergencies, and
- Provide local districts with the intranet link to the updated 8/03 version of the LDSS-2291: "Request for Replacement of Food Purchased with Food Stamp Benefits". This form must be used when there is a request for replacement of food purchased with food stamp benefits. It can be accessed at: http://otda.state.ny.net/ldss_eforms/eforms/2291.pdf

Food Stamp Source Book section 11 provides direction on replacement of food purchased with food stamp (FS) benefits. An issuance of FS benefits to replace food which was purchased with FS benefits but subsequently destroyed in a household misfortune must be made, provided that:

- a. The household reports the loss within 10 days of the date of the misfortune; and
- b. The household returns a signed and completed form LDSS-2291 "Request for Replacement of Food Purchased with Food Stamp Benefits" within 10 days of the date of the report of loss. If the 10th day falls on a weekend or holiday, a statement received the day after the weekend or holiday is acceptable.

Temporary Assistance

Local districts can provide Emergency Temporary Assistance to those individuals and families whose food has spoiled due to the power outage, who are not eligible for Food Stamps and who are in an immediate need situation. The amount is normally a prorated portion (for the number of days of need) of the non-shelter portion of the household's standard of need (Basic, HEA and SHEA). The household must meet all other eligibility factors as specified in the Temporary Assistance Source Book (chapter 10, section F for ESNA or chapter 11, section C for EAF.) Local districts that anticipate mass requests for such assistance may use the DSS-880 "Register of Application and Authorization for Emergency Assistance." Persons unable to prepare food at home may also be eligible for a prorated portion of the restaurant allowance granted in accordance with 18 NYCRR Parts 352.7(c).

In the event of flooding, although there are no waivers of Temporary Assistance (TA) program eligibility requirements, there are existing emergency assistance programs available to meet the emergency needs that arise from the situation. In addition to replacement of food items due to spoilage, all emergency programs will cover shelter

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(including emergency shelter), furniture, and clothing replacement. Property and equipment repairs/replacements, including heating equipment, may also be provided as specified in 18 NYCRR Parts 352.4(d), 352.7 (b) and 397.5 (h).

Even though an individual or family may have income or resources that would ordinarily exceed the income and resource eligibility standards for recurring TA, these individuals and families may be eligible for a onetime only TA payment to meet their immediate needs. For emergency TA, only actually available income and resources are counted in determining eligibility. This release also reminds districts that the income standard for Emergency Safety Net Assistance (ESNA) of 125% of the current federal income official poverty line income limitation does **not** apply if the emergency is the result of a fire, flood, or other like catastrophe. Therefore, this gross income limit for ESNA may not apply for occurrences related to resulting from catastrophic circumstances.

Additional Information

The content of the Governor's August 25, 2011 press release declaring a state of emergency appears below.

August 25, 2011

**GOVERNOR CUOMO DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN NEW YORK
IN PREPARATION FOR POTENTIAL IMPACT OF HURRICANE IRENE**
Hurricane Irene May Hit New York State this Weekend

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today declared a state of emergency in New York in preparation for the potential impact of Hurricane Irene, which may hit New York State this coming weekend.

A state of emergency enables New York to use state resources to assist local governments more effectively and quickly, allows the state to activate the national "Emergency Management Assistance Compact" to bring in resources from out of the state, and enables New York to access key federal resources earlier in anticipation of an emergency.

The Governor is continuing to coordinate the statewide preparation for the storm and has ordered the state's Emergency Operations Center in Albany to operate twenty-four hours a day. At the Governor's direction, state agencies and local governments are planning cooperative response efforts. Governor Cuomo and his administration have been in contact with local officials, including New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and county executives, to coordinate preparation. The state government is communicating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service to discuss the potential tracks of the storm.

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"In this emergency I am activating all levels of state government to prepare for any situation that may be caused by Hurricane Irene," Governor Cuomo said. "We are communicating with our federal and local partners to track the storm and to plan a coordinated response, and we will deploy resources as needed to the areas expected to be hit the hardest. I urge New Yorkers to personally prepare for hurricane conditions and to cooperate with emergency officials if needed. By working together, we will all be able to face this storm in a calm and organized manner."

Governor Cuomo is overseeing state mobilization in preparation for the potential storm, including:

- The state's senior emergency management staff will be assigned to the storm's anticipated centers downstate and on Long Island to strengthen coordination.
- The **Office of Emergency Management** (OEM) is coordinating with the National Weather Service to track the storm. OEM's Emergency Operations Center is activated and OEM has deployed command vehicles to Nassau and Suffolk counties. OEM will make additional deployments of personnel and resources as needed. OEM is also coordinating with emergency teams across the state to activate local emergency plans.
- The **Division of State Police** is preparing to stage resources, including aviation, marine, dive, and communications units.
- The **Division of Military and Naval Affairs** is developing a plan to put hundreds of troops on State Active Duty to deal with storm-related response. These troops would be available to work with state and city agencies as required.
- The state **Department of Health** is coordinating with the NYC Department of Health to plan for potential evacuations or sheltering of hospitals in certain flood zones.
- The **Public Service Commission** (PSC) is preparing for potential outages, coordinating with power plants and transmission line operators, and setting up extra staff for the weekend. The Governor's office and the PSC also spoke directly with CEOs of the six major electric utilities – Con Edison, National Grid, Orange & Rockland, Central Hudson, NYSEG, and RG&E – to discuss collaboration on potential power restoration efforts. The PSC's consumer services office will have extra weekend staff to deal with outage complaints and to provide the public with information.
- The **New York Power Authority** (NYPA) and **Long Island Power Authority** (LIPA) are both confirming extra staffing and conducting internal operations to prepare for potential impacts. LIPA is closely coordinating with National Grid to ensure it is fully prepared on Long Island.
- The **Metropolitan Transportation Authority** (MTA) has cancelled all weekend track work and is directing personnel to be on standby for emergency repairs. The MTA will have Subway Emergency Dispatch Vehicles, subway track maintenance personnel, and extra bus tow trucks standing by. The MTA's subway division and bridges and tunnels division will have emergency generators on

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standby for potential power failures. The MTA is also inspecting critical subway, track, and tunnel pumps to ensure they are working properly.

- The **Department of Transportation** has begun preventive maintenance and debris removal and is distributing flood control equipment. Equipment in active work zones is being secured, additional erosion protection is being addressed as necessary, barges are secured, and plans for post-storm clean-up are being developed.

- The **Thruway Authority** is checking all vehicles and readying equipment. The Authority is outfitting trucks to clear debris and will begin patrols on Saturday. The Authority will have extra staff available to deal with potential impacts of the storm. The Tappan Zee Bridge will be closed to truck, trailer, and mobile home traffic if winds reach 45 mph and this traffic will be diverted to other outlets.

- The **Bridge Authority** is conducting constant monitoring of wind conditions at its six bridges. Wind advisories for motorists will be issued as necessary. Particularly vulnerable are empty box trucks and trailers, which should avoid all bridges during a high wind storm. The Authority has extra staff to monitor wind conditions and to respond to emergency situations. Trucks and large, light vehicles will be discouraged from crossing bridges if wind speeds increase.

- The **Department of Environmental Conservation** (DEC) is identifying erosion hot spots and potential damage impact areas, monitoring reservoir levels, planning deployment of staff on Monday to assess storm damage, and enhancing their permitting capabilities to speed any necessary storm damage repairs. DEC is in contact with local governments regarding management of storm debris and will monitor wastewater and sewage treatment plant operations. DEC is canceling reservations at all DEC campgrounds in the Catskill Preserve (North-South Lake, Bear Spring Mountain, Beaverkill, Devil's Tombstone, Kenneth L. Wilson, Little Pond, Mongaup Pond, and Woodland Valley). DEC will close and evacuate these Campgrounds as well as Catskill Preserve Day Use facilities by noon on Saturday.

- The **Department of Corrections** has facilities that fall within the hurricane's projected path in New York City. There are no correctional facilities located in Nassau or Suffolk counties. All of the correctional facilities are equipped with proper generators, water storage tanks, and sufficient supplies of food to last for ten days.

- The **Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation** has canceled all Friday, Saturday, and Sunday camping reservations at all state parks in the Long Island, Palisades and Taconic regions. A complete evacuation of anyone remaining in the campgrounds will occur at noon on Saturday. Parks will be closed if wind speeds reach 45 mph, or as weather conditions require.

In addition, over the coming days the state is deploying the following agencies down to local county and city emergency management offices:

- NYC: Office of Emergency Management; Office of Fire Prevention & Control; Department of Health; Division of State Police; Port Authority of New York &

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New Jersey; Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Department of Transportation; Department of Environmental Conservation; American Red Cross

- Nassau County: Office of Emergency Management; Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Department of Transportation; Long Island Rail Road; Division of State Police; Division of Military and Naval Affairs, if activated; Office of Fire Prevention & Control; Department of Health; Department of Environmental Conservation; American Red Cross
- Suffolk County: Office of Emergency Management; Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Department of Transportation; Long Island Rail Road; Division of State Police; Division of Military and Naval Affairs, if activated; Office of Fire Prevention & Control; Department of Health; Department of Environmental Conservation; American Red Cross
- Westchester County: Metro-North Railroad; Office of Fire Prevention & Control; Department of Transportation; Division of State Police; Thruway Authority; Department of Environmental Conservation; Office of Emergency Management; Department of Health; American Red Cross

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has deployed the Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) A to Albany to be staged in the FEMA Joint Field Office and IMAT B to New Jersey to assist with planning and preparedness efforts.

The actual strength of the hurricane will depend on its course up the east coast of the United States. Parts of the state that are adjacent to coastal waters, such as Long Island and New York City, are considered most at risk. Inland locations can also be affected by heavy rainfall and strong winds, which can cause flooding and power outages.

Governor Cuomo urges New Yorkers to take stock of their emergency supplies, such as water, non-perishable food, radios, batteries, supplies for any pets, and first aid kits. The Governor also encourages New Yorkers to check in with neighbors, especially the elderly or disabled, who might need assistance to ensure that their needs are met if emergency instructions are issued.