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Free Legal Assistance Available

A toll-free legal aid hotline is available for survivors of recent storms and flooding in Iowa.

Those seeking assistance may call 877-775-8882, 24 hours a day. Survivors who qualify for assistance will be matched with Iowa lawyers who have volunteered to provide free help.

Visit the Task Force Website

For more information on the Missouri River Recovery Coordination Task Force visit www.MoRiverRecovery.iowa.gov.

IRS Approves Housing Relief for Iowans Impacted by Missouri River Flood

In December 2011, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) approved the Branstad/Reynolds Administration's request for a temporary waiver of income restrictions on federal housing tax credit properties throughout the state to assist Iowans who may have been displaced by the Missouri River flooding last summer. The Iowa Finance Authority administers the federal housing tax credit program in Iowa and a listing of properties is available at: www.IowaFinanceAuthority.gov/EmergencyHousing.

"The IRS approval of our request for affordable housing relief means that hundreds of Iowans who may have been displaced by the Missouri River flooding, but may not have been income-qualified to live at a federal housing tax property now have that



option," said Branstad. "Lieutenant Governor Reynolds and I are committed to providing flood-impacted Iowans with the essential tools they need to successfully rebuild a safe, decent and affordable place to call home."

"Having adequate housing is at the core of strong families and vibrant communities. By allowing Iowans who have been displaced by the

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Department of Transportation Innovations to Repair Flood-Damaged Roads

While the Missouri River flooding last summer took a toll on public infrastructure in western Iowa, the disaster also provided an impetus to take a fresh look at some processes used by the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) for roadway damage inspection reporting and record keeping, as well as the highway reconstruction process itself.

For an emergency roadway project to be eligible for 100 percent reimburse-

ment under the federal Emergency Relief (ER) program, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that mitigation or repair work be completed within 180 days of the beginning of the disaster. If the work is not completed within that period, it would be eligible for reimbursement at a rate of 80 percent for noninterstate roadways and 90 percent for interstate highways.

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DOT Innovations Speed Repair of Roadways Damaged by Missouri River Flooding

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To assure receipt of full federal reimbursement for state roadways damaged by the flooding, the Iowa DOT relied on two never-before-used processes; one involved acceleration of the federal funding application process and the other fast-tracking of repair and reconstruction of damaged public infrastructure.

Technology changes the way detailed damage inspection reports (DDIR) are filed

Following the 2008 floods, the Iowa DOT automated its paper-based DDIR system through development of an electronic submittal system. It was used for the first time during the western Iowa floods of 2011.

The system was developed in-house by the Iowa DOT's Information Technology Division. It is used by employees with the Iowa DOT, counties, cities, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and railroad companies. Along with the DDIR form that is eventually submitted to FHWA, the system produces a map depicting the location of the damaged site, and allows documents and pictures to be attached. In addition, the system warns users if certain fields are not entered correctly or information is missing,

allows the user to select certain information from drop-down menus and automatically creates a report number.

Once the DDIR entry is complete, the system generates an e-mail notifying the ER program administrator that a new DDIR has been created. This automated system saves time and money, and reduces the incidence of errors on the DDIR forms.

Missouri River flooding, the Iowa DOT recognized that this western Iowa lifeline needed to be repaired in months, not years.

Working closely with the contracting industry, the Iowa DOT's offices of Design and Contracts developed construction plans and a bid package that included one, lump-sum bid item – I-680 reconstruction.

Kelly Bell, Iowa DOT transportation engineer specialist, who spearheaded the process for the Office of Design, said many pieces fell into place to allow her office to produce the necessary plans in less than a week, instead of the two to three years typically allotted for this type of project.

Because I-680 was to be reconstructed on the existing highway alignment or footprint, the Iowa DOT was able to bypass the often time-consuming environmental process associated with new construction. Utilizing elements of the as-built

plans from the original interstate project constructed in the 1960s was a significant time-saver.

Another major factor in the quick turnaround time was so many Iowa DOTers were willing to drop what they were doing and focus specifically on the I-680 project. Several

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Top: Construction on I-680 near the Memorial Bridge on Sept. 20, 2011. At right: I-680 Memorial Bridge on Nov. 2 when all four lanes were reopened to traffic.



Limited-design contracting and a lump-sum bid process allows Interstate 680 to be rebuilt in record time

Preparing for a "normal" interstate reconstruction project, which involves environmental and design work and bid preparation, can take up to five years. When I-680 was severely damaged by the Mis-

Flood-Exposed Electrical Equipment May Pose Safety Hazard

Although the water from the Missouri River flooding has receded, potential safety hazards may be lurking in its wake.

Contaminants such as field chemicals, sewage, motor fuels, or debris the flood water gathered along its path, now remain to deteriorate your electrical system. Electrical equipment exposed to flood water can be extremely hazardous if energized without proper reconditioning or replacement. Studies from previous floods have revealed that the pollutants left in electrical devices like switches, receptacles, and circuit breakers cause corrosion that will affect the integrity and performance of these devices, usually resulting in failure. In fact, infiltration of flood water into non-metallic sheathed cable (Romex) may lie dormant for extended periods of time before causing conductor failure.

“Safety is our first concern. Iowans affected by flood don’t need another tragedy on their hands. Make

sure you replace all of your flood-affected electrical equipment, so your family doesn’t need to worry about a fire or electrocution,” said Chief Electrical Inspector Pat Mer-



rick with the Iowa Department of Public Safety, State Fire Marshal’s Office.

Nationally recognized manufacturers and safety organizations strongly suggest that any electrical

devices, equipment or conductors subjected to flood water be replaced. Additionally, to ensure safety and proper removal and replacement, it’s important to always have a licensed electrician making repairs on your home. Electrical appliances touched by flood water, such as water heaters, ranges, or dishwashers also need to be replaced or repaired by the original manufacturer or approved representative.

The Electrical Inspection Section of the State Fire Marshal’s Office is available for any electrical questions or assistance concerning the replacement of your electrical equipment. Call 866-923-1082 for answers to your questions or to obtain contact information for the electrical inspector in your area. Inspector information is also available at the Electrical Inspection Section website: www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/electrician. ♦

Article submitted by the Iowa Department of Public Safety.

Assistance from Federal Emergency Management Agency to Individuals and Communities in Iowa Reaches \$21.7 Million

More than \$21 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance has been approved for individuals, businesses and communities impacted by the Missouri River flooding.

Assistance for Individuals and Businesses

As of Jan. 25, 2012, FEMA had approved \$4.5 million in Individ-

ual Assistance funding for residents of Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties. The deadline to apply for this assistance was Jan. 3, 2012.

Public Assistance

FEMA has obligated \$17.2 million for projects under the Public Assistance Program in Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona, Pot-

tawattamie and Woodbury counties.

Projects funded under this program include the repair of roads, bridges and other public infrastructure, along with emergency protective measures taken to prevent or mitigate damage from flood waters. ♦

DOT Speeds Missouri River Flooding Roadway Repair Projects

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employees in the Office of Design, District 4 and others spent weeks working exclusively on the I-680 project.

At the same time the plans were being finalized, the Office of Contracts was preparing to solicit bids from contractors.

Typically, contractors bid separately on several individual elements of a project. For I-680, contractors were asked to bid on one line item, I-680 reconstruction. This was the first major lump-sum bid of its kind in Iowa. While several specific items were listed in the proposal, contrac-

Iowa's contracting community came alongside the Iowa DOT in accomplishing this reconstruction project in record time.

tors were asked to bid the project as a whole. Accomplishing the bid process at the same time as the design was being finalized was another significant time-saver, as these processes are not typically accomplished concurrently.

Other alterations to the bid letting process were made to accommodate a tighter time frame. These included: (1) limited bid advertising, which was authorized through an emergency gover-

nor's proclamation; (2) inclusion of incentives and a bonus to accelerate project completion; and (3) having Iowa DOT field staff available seven days a week to answer contractor questions and resolve issues.

Iowa's contracting community came alongside the Iowa DOT in accomplishing this reconstruction project in record time. Prebid meetings were held with contractors to solicit ideas and the contractor selected for the project flew in to sign the contract the same day as the bid letting. ♦

Article submitted by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Mighty Mo Flood Conference March 27-28

What did you do? Why did you do it? Would you do it again? These are questions organizers of the Mighty Mo Flood Conference hope you will answer and share with other participants on March 27-28, 2012.

The conference, hosted by the University of South Dakota and Morningside College, will highlight best practices and cover a variety of topics, including the future of the Missouri River, mental health preparedness, environmental and economic impact, the role of local, state and federal governments and volunteer coordination. The goal of the conference is to bring together agen-

cies to create a stronger, more unified response to emergencies.

Location: Muenster University Center, University of South Dakota, 414 E. Clark, Vermillion, South Dakota

Registration

Deadline: March 20, 2012

Target audi-

ence: Incident command staff, elected officials, responders at local, state and federal levels and academic researchers.



Photo courtesy of Iowa National Guard.

For more information or to register contact Michelle Skaff at 712-899-3757 or miskaff@sioux-city.org. ♦

IRS Approves Housing Relief

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floods access to hundreds of affordable housing properties throughout the state, we're arming them with a tool that will be vital in their rebuilding process," said Lt. Governor Reynolds.

Eligible Iowans must have resided in one of the five counties

that were designated for Individual Assistance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during the period of May 25, 2011, to August 1, 2011. These counties include: Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties. ♦

State and Federal Assistance Available for Iowa Agriculture Producers

Agriculture producers who sustained damage from the flooding of the Missouri River may be eligible for assistance.

USDA Secretarial Designation

The United States Department of Agriculture granted a disaster designation for 60 counties for disaster-related damage in 2011.

Assistance is available through the Farm Service Agency (FSA),

including emergency loans and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program.

Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the Oct. 12, 2011, designation to apply for emergency loan assistance. SURE Program applications for 2011 crop losses will be accepted in 2012.

More information can be obtained through local FSA offices. ♦

Mitigating Future Disaster Damage: Missouri River Flood Recovery Update

The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division's mitigation staff recently submitted the City of Council Bluffs property acquisition application to FEMA on Jan. 19. The application consists of the acquisition and demolition of 13 substantially damaged properties. The properties are located along

Gifford Road and Emil Lane in southwest Council Bluffs. Each property is located in the floodway between the flood protection levee and the Missouri River. The project cost is estimated at \$2,982,493; it will remove flood-damaged structures from the floodway and return the area to green space in perpetuity. ♦

Missouri River Recovery
Coordination Task Force

Chairman
Brig. Gen. Derek Hill,
Deputy Adjutant General,
Iowa National Guard

The Missouri River Flood Recovery newsletter is published by the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division in cooperation with members of the Missouri River Recovery Coordination Task Force.

Questions or comments may be directed to:
**MoRiverRecovery@
iowa.gov.**

