

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2011

Mr. William Craig Fugate  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW, Room 828  
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

As you well know, Tropical Storm Irene will go down in history as one of the worst natural disasters ever to hit the State of Vermont. We are confident that as in times past, Vermonters will pick up the pieces and restore our homes, businesses and communities. But we cannot do this alone, and we very much appreciate your efforts, as well as the efforts of FCO Craig Gilbert and his staff, to coordinate the federal response and recovery in Vermont. We are writing to request an expedited determination, in accordance with federal law, to allow mobile homes in the State of Vermont destroyed by Tropical Storm Irene to be ruled a reimbursable expense under the FEMA's Public Assistance Program.

We understand that FCO Gilbert and his staff have been working with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to try to find a solution to the issue of disposal of mobile homes that have been destroyed. As of today, we estimate that more than 140 mobile homes were destroyed in the flooding. Many of the owners of these destroyed mobile homes have already applied for, and in some cases have already received FEMA Individual Assistance. Given that mobile home owners are among the lowest income homeowners in the state, we have a shared interest in seeing that they are able to use as much as possible of the FEMA IA assistance for permanent housing solutions, rather than for disposal of the ruined mobile homes. Accordingly, we would like to exhaust every conceivable avenue to cover removal of these destroyed homes through FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program.

We understand that mobile homes in privately-owned parks are considered by FEMA to be commercial structures, and therefore generally are not eligible for Public Assistance. However, we also understand that pursuant to FEMA Disaster Assistance Policy 9523.4, there may be some cases where the FCO determines that the demolition of commercial structures by a State or local government may be eligible for FEMA reimbursement under Section 403 of the Stafford Act, when such removal is in the public interest. We note that in addition to eliminating unsafe structures that pose an immediate threat to the public, 44 CFR 206.224(a) also defines the public interest for the purpose of debris removal as "ensur[ing] economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large."

Given the need to remove these mobile homes in a timely manner for health, safety and economic reasons, we are requesting that the FCO immediately declare that mobile homes ruled a total loss by FEMA officials in relation to the Vermont flood are eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

We appreciate your immediate consideration of this request. Many mobile home residents are elderly or disabled and live on a fixed income. Almost all are low income. Winter is fast approaching and we must resolve this pressing problem as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

  
PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator

  
BERNARD SANDERS  
United States Senator

  
PETER WELCH  
United States Representative