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## Federal funding would help

Strickland's request might help offset damage, overtime costs

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Local Desk Editor

FAIRFIELD COUNTY - Fairfield County and the rest of the state could recoup some funding for recovery efforts if a \$7 million request to the federal government is approved.

Gov. Ted Strickland sent a letter to President Bush Wednesday seeking federal assistance in the aftermath of the storm that swept through the state Sunday.

"It will help recover the loss made by the local governments like Fairfield County - whoever incurred costs with (overtime) or debris removal," said Tamara McBride, spokeswoman for the Ohio Emergency Management Agency.

"Whatever the costs are, this money will reimburse them for that," said McBride.

This money could come in handy for cities such as Lancaster where city street employees worked to remove debris on Sunday - their day off - and have put in more overtime, working 12-hour days since Monday.

Strickland declared a state of emergency on Monday, the first statewide declaration made since the Blizzard of 1978, McBride said.

### **WEATHERING THE STORM**

The wind storm, remnants of Hurricane Ike, left down power lines throughout the state, hundreds of inoperable traffic signals, uprooted trees and scattered debris. The deaths of seven people, including the a Fairfield County man, are being blamed on the storm.

Ohio's utilities reported about 900,000 homes and businesses still were without power Wednesday, down from 2.6 million customers at some point after the wind storm hit Sunday, according to an Associated Press article.

As of 7 p.m. Wednesday, about 8,000 AEP Ohio customers in Fairfield County still were without power - a drop from the Eagle-Gazette's last reported total of nearly 15,000 people on Tuesday.

About 500 South Central Power customers in the county were without power as of 7 p.m. Wednesday - also down from the *Eagle-Gazette's* last reported total of 5,500 customers on Tuesday.

Lisa Hooker, spokeswoman for South Central Power Company, said about 50 crews are working to restore power to customers in the company's service area.

"We're still shooting for Friday night into Saturday (to have power fully restored)," Hooker said.

More than 3,000 AEP Ohio crews, AEP affiliates and non-AEP crews - field employees, line and tree crews, and assessors - are out in the field making repairs to get power restored, said Rachel Dutton, spokeswoman for the company.

And more are on the way, she said.

The utility company has crews coming in from nearby states such as Indiana, Michigan, West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky; nonAEP crews are arriving from as far away as Florida and Quebec and Ontario, to name a few.

"The big reason it takes so long (to restore power) is the extent of the damage out there is the big issue," Dutton said.

#### **PROVIDING FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT**

The American Red Cross Chapter of Fairfield County kept its shelter open Wednesday, the fourth day it's been available for residents without power.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided at the shelter at Mills Memorial United Methodist Church today, but the shelter will be closed after dinner at 6 p.m., said Susan Nixon Stoughton, executive director of the agency.

The agency will serve lunch and dinner at the shelter Friday to allow residents time to transition back into their homes because power is expected to be fully restored to most, if not all residents, on Friday, Stoughton said.

Stoughton, who didn't have power at her Lancaster residence until Wednesday evening, said she identified with what others have gone through during this outage.

"I understand their pain," Stoughton said. "It is what it is. You can't do anything about it anyway, so I'm fine with it. But it would be nice to have it back," she said earlier Wednesday.

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## HOW YOU CAN GET HELP

Funds are available for a limited time for residents who incurred damage to their properties in the wind storm.

The state has allocated \$55,000 to Job and Family Services agencies in each county to distribute to residents who meet certain eligibility requirements. There also is \$11,000 in funding available to elderly and disabled residents who meet the guidelines.

In order to qualify for the 2008 Statewide High Winds Program, your household income must fall within 200 percent of the Federal Eligibility Guidelines and you must be either:

- Age of 55 and older, or
- Have a child in the household.

For example, a family four that has a monthly gross income less than \$3,534.00 could be eligible.

The funds are available until Oct. 17 through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families measure.

"The damage done by the high winds affects such a great percentage of the community, and it affects (residents') ability to even get the basic needs met, so this can assist them with that," said Aundrea Cordle, human resources director for Fairfield County Job and Family Services.

Applications for this emergency assistance are available at Fairfield County Job & Family Services, 239 W. Main St., Lancaster.

To find out if you qualify for this assistance or for more information, call the agency at 740-653-1701.

## HOW YOU CAN GET HELP

### FOR RESIDENTS WITHOUT POWER

#### **Assistance for residents without power:**

The Red Cross will serve three meals today and two meals Friday at Mills Memorial United Methodist Church, 402 N. Broad St., Lancaster.

The meal times for today are:

8 a.m.: Breakfast

Noon: Lunch

6 p.m.: Dinner

Meal times for Friday are:

Noon: Lunch

6 p.m.: Dinner

The shelter at the church will be shut down after dinner today.

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