

**EAST ORANGE RECORD - ORANGE TRANSCRIPT**

# FEMA staffs centers for face-to-face help

**By John Zucal  
Managing Editor**

Federal officials have opened offices for residents of Essex County who seek help for hurricane recovery relief.

Officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency said Friday personnel created a site inside the Fairfield Community Center, 376 Hollywood Ave. It will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Residents who need in-person help, however, have been asked to register with FEMA prior to visiting the center:

- Internet: [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov).
- Telephone: 800-621-3362.
- TTY: 800-462-7585.
- 711 or video-relay service: 800-621-3362.

Officials said the TTY and 711 services will be available daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Residents in both counties reported additional property problems last week after the remnants of Tropical Storm Lee dumped heavy rain. Disaster assistance, however, will be available only for damages caused as a result of Hurricane Irene, said Tom Pechal, a FEMA spokesman. Pechal added Monday the declared time period

covers Aug. 27 to Sept. 5.

In the case of a residential application, said FEMA officials, a home inspection is scheduled with personnel who have been hired by the agency. Officials stressed residents should ask for identification from FEMA-hired personnel.

“FEMA hires contractors whose job is to go out, do an assessment and report back to FEMA,” said Pechal. He stressed the agency does not charge for inspections.

FEMA officials also warned residents to enlist the services of a licensed contractor as they seek to repair physical damage to a residence or business building. The officials said their experience in prior disasters found that many customers had hired companies which scoured a disaster area for potential clients. If low-quality work was performed, said officials, customers often had little recourse without state oversight.

The deadline is Oct. 31 for all disaster assistance applications. Pechal recommended residents file an application even if they are uncertain of their eligibility. He said it is better for residents to apply immediately for consideration rather than not apply and learn after the deadline they are eligible.