

Storm victims await federal aid

By Tammy Coleman
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While private citizens and business owners wait anxiously for their turn, city and county officials are filling out forms and looking toward the Federal Emergency Management Agency for reimbursement for storm-related repairs and cleanup.

President Reagan declared Pottawattamie County a federal disaster area nearly two weeks after tornadoes ripped through Council Bluffs causing more than \$16 million in uninsured damages.

Council Bluffs is eligible to receive federal assistance for uninsured tornado damage estimated at \$1,042,150 to public property following the July 28 disaster declaration.

But action on a declaration that would provide funding for business, commercial and residential damage from the tornadoes is still under consideration.

The preliminary estimate of damage to city property determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency is just over \$1 million. Local officials had originally estimated damage at \$1.5 million then revised the estimate upward to \$1.7 million.

Mayor Tom Hanafan said he was happy with the public aid figures.

"We have insurance, but it doesn't cover everything. It doesn't cover street lights or tree removal," Hanafan said. "We're going to get the funds. For a while there, we weren't sure we were going to get anything."

The final figure could be higher or lower than FEMA's estimate. The agency will pay 75 percent of the final cost for public property damage, whatever it may be, according to Pam McKinney, press secretary for U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin,

D-Iowa.

FEMA funding comes from the President's Disaster Fund.

The other 25 percent of the storm repair costs would be paid with a combination of state and local funds.

Federal money can be used for debris removal, road repair, damage to parks and recreation facilities and any protective measures taken immediately after the storm to ensure health

and safety, according to FEMA officials.

Tree replacement along street rights of way and in city parks is a legitimate expense under the guidelines, but all expenditures will have to be approved by FEMA representatives, said Dick Vohs, press secretary for Gov. Terry Branstad.

"There may be some choices to be made in how to go about rebuilding. FEMA's main role is
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Shirlee Villarreal, 2320 Ave. K, sifts through the wreckage of her home Saturday afternoon.—Photo by Dan Koenig.