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Jeb Spaulding, Secretary

January 29, 2014

Dear Vermont Municipal Official,

I am writing you to let you know of an important change regarding State promised assistance after a major flood or other natural disaster. This change is intended to encourage communities across Vermont to take action to improve their community's resilience to future flood impacts, which will save taxpayer money over time.

Following the recovery from Tropical Storm Irene, the State of Vermont modified its standard for managing the State's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF). The new standard, which will be effective for any disaster after October 23, 2014, is structured to encourage municipalities to take four basic steps to prepare their communities *before the next disaster*:

1. Have proactive flood hazard regulations;
2. Adopt up-to-date (2014-2016) local Transportation Codes and Standards;
3. Establish an up-to-date Local Emergency Operations Plan; and,
4. Develop and adopt a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

After a federally-declared disaster, federal public assistance funds from FEMA can reimburse 75% of eligible community losses associated with damage to public infrastructure. Typical community losses eligible for public assistance funds include costs to repair or replace transportation infrastructure, debris removal, and emergency protective measures.

Communities that have taken the four basic steps will receive an additional 12.5% state contribution to cover the damage.


Communities that have not taken these steps will still receive state aid, but at a reduced amount. Those communities will receive a state contribution rate of 7.5%.

In addition, communities can secure state contribution of 17.5% by completing the four basic steps and by taking an additional step to protect themselves from flood damages. Please refer to the *ERAF Frequently Asked Questions Enclosure* for more information.

Please contact your regional planning commission or development agency, the Vermont Agency of Transportation District staff, or the Vermont League of Cities and Towns if you need additional assistance.

Thank you for attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,


Jeb Spaulding
Secretary of Administration

Enclosure: hand-out (with links) about the new ERAF criteria which will take effect on Oct. 23, 2014



Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) Frequently Asked Questions

For more information and live links direct your browser to:
tinyurl.com/eraf2014

ERAF provides State funding to match Federal Public Assistance after federally-declared disasters. Eligible public costs are reimbursed by federal taxpayers at 75%. For disasters after October 23, 2014, the State of Vermont will contribute an additional 7.5% toward the costs. For communities that take specific steps to reduce flood damage the State will contribute 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost.

What is needed?

Steps to Qualify for 12.5% State Share

Eligible communities must have adopted four mitigation measures:

1. National Flood Insurance Program (participate or have applied);
2. Town Road and Bridge Standards (annually certify adopted standards that meet or exceed the standards in the current: 2014-2016 *VTrans Orange Book: Handbook for Local Officials*);
3. Local Emergency Operations Plan
(Adopt annually after town meeting and submit before May 1);
4. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
(The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan requirement can be satisfied if the draft plan has been submitted to FEMA Region 1 for review).

Steps to Qualify for 17.5% State Share

Eligible communities must also:

5. Protect River Corridors from new encroachment; or, protect their flood hazard areas from new encroachments and participate in the FEMA Community Rating System.

As an example, after a declared disaster the damage to public infrastructure including roads and culverts may approach a million dollars. Here is how the cost of damage will be carried by federal, state, and municipal taxpayers:

	7.5% ERAF Rate	12.5% ERAF Rate	17.5% ERAF Rate
Federal Share	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
State Share	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$175,000
Municipal Share	\$175,000	\$125,000	\$75,000
100% of \$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

What does my community need to do?

Visit tinyurl.com/eraf2014 to find out what your community has already done.

How do we update our bylaws to protect River Corridors and participate in the National Flood Insurance Program?

Contact the [VT DEC Floodplain Manager for your region](#) and your planner at the [Regional Commission](#).

How do we update and certify our Town Road and Bridge standards?

The current [2014 - 2016 VTrans Orange Book](#) is online. The Select Board adopts and certifies the standards. Contact [VTrans District Staff](#) or your planner at the [Regional Commission](#) for help and more information.

How do we adopt an approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

Support for your Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is available through the [Regional Commission](#) and other consulting planners.

How do we update our Local Emergency Operations Plan?

The Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) needs to be updated after Town Meeting and submitted before May 1. Contact your [Regional Commission](#) for help and more information.

Who administers ERAF?

The Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) manages Public Assistance funds and tracks the eligibility of individual municipalities for State matching funds.

Who can I call or e-mail directly for help and more information?

Milly Archer, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center, (802) 229-9111, marcher@vlct.org

For more information read:

[Flood Damage Mitigation Incentives for Municipalities under the New ERAF Rule](#), A summary of ERAF from the November, 2012, *VLCT News*. www.vlct.org