



# NEWS

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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## State funds to help Starr County restore housing in wake of damaging floods

(AUSTIN) — The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) and State Senator Judith Zaffirini have announced a funding award to repair or rebuild homes in Starr County damaged by severe flooding in 2008. The funds will help eligible households make the necessary repairs and keep their homes while providing a shot in the arm to the local economy.

TDHCA awarded the Starr County \$500,000 in disaster recovery funds through a portion of the Department's HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program designed to restore damaged housing units owned and lived in by low income Texans. Through this partnership between state and county officials, the funds will help repair or rebuild an estimated seven area homes.

"The residents of Starr County experienced a major disaster last summer, and it is important that the state help restore its housing stock in the wake of this flooding," said Senator Zaffirini in making the announcement. "This type of assistance is crucial to rural Texas, particularly because many homeowners do not have the funds to make the necessary repairs themselves. I urge TDHCA to continue its commitment to Texas communities."

"Preserving rural housing stock is an important mission of the Department," said Michael Gerber, Executive Director of TDHCA, "particularly after a flood or other natural disaster. Helping maintain homeownership significantly improves the viability of smaller communities. This award will also help generate local construction jobs and stabilize the local tax base. We recognize that these funds won't help make the county whole again, but they should go a long way towards helping community and its residents recover from this devastating flood."

Torrential rains fell across South Texas August 18-24, 2008, the worst of which occurred in Starr County. Because the region remained saturated from Hurricane Dolly, which made landfall in late July, the heavy rains resulted in severe flooding that damaged several hundred homes, in addition to several county roads and related infrastructure.

Once officials with Starr County were notified of available disaster relief funds under the HOME Program, the county applied to TDHCA to help meet the unmet housing needs of local communities. Technical assistance for completing an application was also provided by Department staff, culminating in this award.

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is the funding source for the HOME Program, and funds are designed to assist households at or below 80 percent of the area median family income. For Starr County, this equals an annual income of \$36,500 for a family for four.

In addition to meeting the income requirements, homeowners assisted through this program must occupy their home as their principal residence and the structure must have been directly affected by the disaster.

**About The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs**

*The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is the state agency responsible for affordable housing, community services, energy assistance, and colonia housing programs. The Department currently administers more than \$2 billion through for-profit, nonprofit, and local government partnerships to deliver local housing and community-based opportunities and assistance to Texans in need.*