

NEWS from the N.D. Department of Human Services

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Power outages lead to food losses; program helps 186 households

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Easter weekend storm and resulting widespread power outages in western and central North Dakota put a damper on Easter dinners and a dent in grocery budgets as affected households coped with the challenge of keeping fresh food properly refrigerated for days.

While power restoration work continues, over 186 households who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have requested and received replacement benefits. The N.D. Department of Human Services replaced \$45,448 in food assistance benefits, which averages out to \$244.35 per qualifying low-income households.

“The timing of the storm so close to the holiday certainly contributed to the losses. People tend to use their benefits and buy groceries soon after benefits are issued at the beginning of the month,” said program director Arlene Dura.

Dura said the federally-funded U.S. Department of Agriculture program offers replacement benefits to participating SNAP households who lose food in disaster-related situations and report their losses. She praised county social service office employees for their work verifying losses and assisting program clients.

The number of SNAP households receiving replacement benefits may increase because some areas remain without power, and SNAP clients can request a replacement within 10 days of experiencing a disaster-related food loss. In addition, Human Services has received several incomplete requests and is awaiting more information.

At its peak, about 8,000 households were without power in an area that included Burleigh, Grant, McHenry, McLean, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, Sioux, Ward, and Wells counties, as well as part of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Individuals with questions can contact their county social services office or the N.D. Department of Human Services at 800-755-2716.

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