

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Nearly \$500,000 in Disaster Food Benefits Help Qualifying Ward County Residents Affected by Flooding

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services announced today that nearly \$500,000 in disaster food assistance benefits were issued to qualifying Ward County residents through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The disaster program assisted 1,089 households with 2,756 persons who were affected by flooding and were not current program clients.

The program offered a one-time benefit to purchase food at grocery stores and other authorized food vendors for those who experienced disaster-related losses and lived or worked in Ward County at the time of the disaster. The USDA approved the department’s original request to operate the disaster program from July 5 to July 13, and extended it to July 22, 2011 at the state’s request.

“Individuals and families, including seniors and children, are particularly vulnerable when their homes, communities, and lives are turned upside down by natural disasters,” said Darlene Barnes, Regional Administrator for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service in Denver. “In such devastating circumstances, food is one of the most critical needs and FNS works with our State partners to provide critical nutrition assistance to individuals in need.”

The department was also authorized to administer replacement benefits for current SNAP clients whose food supplies were damaged or destroyed due to flooding in Ward County. Agency officials automatically replaced 70 percent of the original June benefit issued to 473 households who lived in the mandatory evacuation areas of Burlington, Foxholm, Minot and Sawyer totaling \$95,000.

In addition, the department received USDA approval to issue supplemental benefits to current Ward County program clients who do not qualify for the disaster food program. The supplemental benefits totaled just over \$51,000 and assured that 289 households in the county (680 persons) received the maximum benefit for their household size.

“We are pleased the department and county social service office were able to operate the disaster food program to give households some short-term help and to free up resources so people can meet other needs during the recovery,” said Carol K. Olson, executive director of the state human services department.

States can apply for Disaster SNAP after a Presidential Disaster Declaration has been issued. This is the third time in 15 years the N.D. Department of Human Services applied for and received authorization to offer the program. The other disasters included the Northwood tornado of 2007 and the Grand Forks flood of 1997.

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