

The disaster declaration related to last week's winter storm, issued by Governor Abbott, included all 254 counties in Texas. FEMA has approved all of Texas for reimbursement of some Public Assistance expenses related, primarily, to sheltering people from the cold. Throughout the state, 77 counties were approved by FEMA for Individual Assistance.

Public Assistance funding in this disaster will be allocated to local governments, school districts, and certain non-profit. Approved expenses may include the cost of leasing and using a generator, food and water, transportation to a shelter, etc. These entities should complete a disaster summary and submit it to the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM).

Right now, the loss of thousands of gallons of water, overtime for personnel fixing water breaks, and supplies and equipment used to fix these leaks, incurred by cities and water districts, are not expenses approved for reimbursement. It is no secret that, statewide, the losses sustained to our water supplies and systems will be substantial. Entities incurring these losses need to keep records of their losses report these losses to TDEM in their disaster summary.

It is my understanding that the 77 counties included in the FEMA directive were selected at random in order to get the ball rolling. The state has asked that an additional 31 counties be added to the 77 but I have not been informed as to whether or not Callahan County is one of those 31.

If you have suffered damage to your home or business, you will find a link on the county website for you to report individual losses. Your information is important and will become part of the overall data on losses sustained in Callahan County.

Whenever there is a disaster, FEMA sets a damage threshold. In other words, the total amount of damage suffered in a specific area has to meet or exceed a certain dollar figure for the federal government to provide relief. In this disaster, the threshold is set at almost \$39 million, statewide. When the county or a city or an individual submits a disaster summary to TDEM, that total goes toward the statewide total, so it is important that all losses be submitted.

If you have questions about submitting your disaster summary or individual loss report, please call and we will try our best to find out the answer. Our local TDEM disaster specialist is very helpful and responds quickly.

Last week was a tough week. Many lost power and water. Some had to seek shelter at a warming center. Some have suffered damage to their home or business. It was also a week in which the very best side of Callahan County citizens shone. Time after time, when assistance was requested, several people would respond. It was heart warming to see the outpouring of kindness and support offered.

As always, please contact me if I can be of assistance.