

Operations Memorandum - SNAP OPS110805

August 30, 2011

SUBJECT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Plan for Response to Hurricane Irene
TO: Executive Directors
FROM: Richard Wallace ,Acting Director, Bureau of Operations

Purpose

Hurricane Irene has caused extensive power outages throughout the state and there is the potential for additional damages not yet determined. For this reason, the following SNAP procedures are being issued.

Background

Federal regulations at 7 CFR §280.1, by authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act of 1988 (the Stafford Act), direct the establishment of temporary emergency standards of eligibility for households who are victims of a disaster and provision for emergency allotments to eligible SNAP households to replace food destroyed in a disaster.

Discussion

SNAP households may qualify for replacement benefits due to the effects of Hurricane Irene. SNAP replacements can be issued for food losses due to a declared disaster or for more localized “household misfortunes.”

A disaster declaration affects a large area or population; damage is very severe and widespread; and, as a result, affected populations are given more flexible eligibility criteria and access to benefits than normally possible in the SNAP program. A “household misfortune” is a fire, local flooding, power outage or similar circumstance lasting a short period of time that affects individuals already receiving SNAP benefits. **CAOs will be advised of specific steps to take if recent events result in declared disaster.**

Eligibility for a SNAP benefit issuance to replace food lost in a household misfortune is determined as follows:

Eligibility for a SNAP benefit issuance to replace food lost in a household misfortune is determined as follows:

- Replacement will be provided if a household timely reports a loss. The report may be made in the County Assistance Office (CAO), by

phone or in writing. The report is timely if it is made within 10 days of the date food is lost in the household misfortune.

- The CAO must verify the household misfortune (dates and affected areas) through a collateral contact, documentation from a community agency, or a home visit.
- The CAO must verify that the household resides in the affected area.
- The lost food must have been purchased with SNAP benefits.
- The CAO must instruct the household to sign a statement of loss and return it to the CAO within 10 days of the date of report.
 - The statement should include the date of loss, reason for the food loss, the amount of the requested replacement and the recipient's signature.
 - The client may bring or mail the statement to the CAO. If the statement of loss is not returned to the CAO within 10 days of the timely report, no replacement will be made.

Recipients who timely report a loss of food and request replacement benefits will be given an authorization for the amount of the loss the recipient has declared, up to the maximum of their monthly SNAP benefit amount. If the SNAP benefits issued in the month of the household misfortune included restored benefits, the full amount of restored benefits will be replaced. There is no requirement to check EBT balances. Use reason code 168 to replace food destroyed in a household misfortune.

Until further notice, CAOs should proceed as follows with regard to the SNAP Program:

Current Recipients:

Under SNAP Handbook Section [580.52](#), recipients who report a loss of food and request replacement benefits should be authorized the amount of the loss reported based on what the recipient has declared but not to exceed their normal maximum months' issuance. There is no requirement to check EBT balances. The client is required to sign an affidavit attesting to the reason for the loss and the amount of the requested replacement (see attached [Affidavit](#)). The signed affidavit could be obtained by mail. Use reason code 168 to replace food destroyed in a household disaster.

Example: A recipient household states they were without power due to the disaster, causing a loss of \$150 worth of food due to spoilage. The household's August allotment was \$200. The client signs an affidavit to request replacement of \$150 SNAP benefits lost due to the power outage. The worker does a one-time issuance for \$150, using reason code 168.

NOTE: There is no limit to the number of replacements for food lost because of a household misfortune. However, they must be separate incidents and the process outlined above must be followed.

Applicants:

New applicants must apply under the regular SNAP and meet all eligibility criteria including income and resource limits. If an applicant is unable to verify anticipated income, the worker will make every effort to assist the client in obtaining the necessary verifications, including collateral contacts, to verify circumstances, income and resources.

Example: An applicant provides one pay stub for August 12, 2011, but cannot anticipate when he will receive his August 26, 2011 pay stub since the company where he is employed is closed until further notice due to equipment damage because of a power outage. Only the August 12 pay is used for the eligibility determination and benefits are issued as per normal procedures for one month only.

For tracking purposes, CAOs will maintain a manual log of all SNAP authorizations and rejections for those applicants affected by conditions related to Hurricane Irene.

Next Steps

1. Share this information with all staff.
2. Direct all questions to your Area Manager.
3. CAOs will manually track all authorizations and rejections on applications submitted in response to the hurricane until further notice.
4. Obsolete this Operations Memorandum after the emergency has been resolved.