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From The Morning Call

Local centers to offer flood disaster relief

Locations will be open today in Northampton, Bucks, Monroe.

By Paul Muschick
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Disaster recovery centers will open today in Bucks, Monroe and Northampton counties to help people file claims for financial and other assistance following the flooding in early April.

The centers will be managed by state and federal emergency management officials.

Agencies will be on hand to answer questions about agricultural services, homeowner's insurance, health and welfare assistance, well-water testing, crisis counseling and senior citizen services.

Home and business owners can file for emergency grants for housing and related needs and for loans through the Small Business Administration.

State and federal authorities still are tallying damage to public property such as roads and parks to determine whether local governments will be eligible for aid, too, said Nick Tylenda, Northampton County's emergency management director.

For now, homeowners, renters and businesses in the eastern Pennsylvania counties of Bucks, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Wayne and Wyoming are eligible for aid.

Those counties were hit hardest by the storm. Between 3 and 5 inches of rain fell in the Lehigh Valley area. Most of the flood damage was along the Delaware River, which crested higher than it did during the flooding from Hurricane Ivan in September.

Nearly 1,200 homes and businesses were damaged in Bucks County, and about 700 were damaged in Northampton County. Initial estimates from Monroe County showed at least \$40 million in damage to businesses.

Residents are encouraged to register with the Federal Emergency Management Agency at 1-800-621-3362 before visiting a center, though it is not mandatory.

It also is not mandatory to visit a center to receive aid.

Centers will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays. They will be closed Sundays.

The locations are:

Bucks County, New Hope Fire Station, 46 N. Sugaan Road, New Hope.

Monroe County, former Odd Lot outlet store, Route 209, Marshalls Creek.

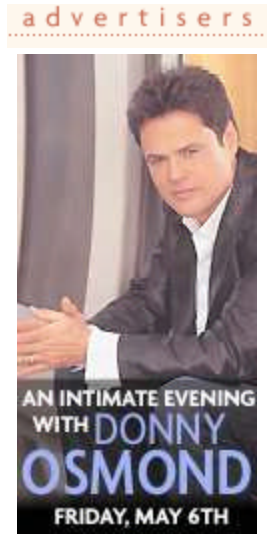
Northampton County, former Laneco supermarket, 1700 Sullivan Trail, Forks Township.

State and federal officials have not determined how long the centers will be open.

Similar centers were open in September following flooding then.

Following that disaster, nearly 600 people visited a center set up at the Forks Township Community Center.

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That location was unavailable this time because the three gyms are booked for events, township Supervisor Donald Miller said.

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Reporter Joe Nixon contributed to this story.

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