

Sandy-hit homeowners can apply for \$150,000 federal grant starting May 24, Christie says

By Eugene Paik/The Star-Ledger The Star-Ledger

SAYREVILLE – Homeowners hoping to get grants of up to \$150,000 to rebuild and strengthen their Hurricane Sandy-ravaged homes can apply for them starting May 24, Gov. Chris Christie said today during a town hall meeting. The date marks the launch of the homeowners' portion of \$1.8 billion released late last month by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Businesses over the past few weeks have already been applying for their share of the money, while homeowners had to wait because of a more complicated funding process.

About 6,000 eligible applicants can receive up to \$150,000 each to fix their homes. The households must have an adjusted gross annual income of less than \$250,000, and the home must be a primary residence.

The money can also be used to elevate houses in flood-prone areas to limit future storm damage.

In a couple of weeks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is expected to release updated "working maps" that will give homeowners a better sense of how New Jersey's flood-zone boundaries could change, Christie said during today's town hall meeting, at Saint Stanislaus Kostka School in Sayreville. The federal government wants to redraw New Jersey's flood insurance rate maps — changes that could go into effect by early 2015.

The \$150,000 grant won't be distributed until later this summer, according to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. But homeowners can use the application to pursue up to \$10,000 grants that will serve as stop-gap relief while they wait.

The HUD funding comes from the \$60 billion Sandy relief package approved by the federal lawmakers in January.

Anyone interested in applying can visit www.sandyhelp.nj.gov. The state has also set up two hotlines: 855-SANDYHM (855-726-3946) for homeowners and 855-SANDYBZ (855-726-3929) for business owners.

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