

Press Release

September 18, 2008

FEMA representatives serving Liberty County met with Cleveland Mayor Jill Kirkonis and Emergency Management Coordinator, Steve Wheeler, Thursday at 3:30 p.m. in Cleveland's Emergency Operation Center. FEMA outlined a program that may help people who have trees on their houses. Home owners should call FEMA Victim Assistance Hotline at 1-800-621-3362 to register. After successfully registering, a homeowner should first document the damage with photographs and then secure a contractor and have the tree removed. You should get complete information about the contractor and a copy of the paid invoice. A registered homeowner may then receive some financial reimbursement from FEMA for the cost of removing the tree. In addition once registered and the tree removed, the Corp of Engineers, Blue Roof Mission, (1-888-766-3258) can help provide tarps to protect the home until the roof is repaired.

At the meeting with FEMA, City Staff also discussed debris removal. The City must follow a specific process in order to qualify for reimbursement of the cost of storm debris removal. Each year the City has contractor secured just for such work. The cost in 2005 for storm debris removal from Hurricane Rita was approximately \$227,000.

A Red Cross Shelter is now open at Calvary Baptist Church Gymnasium located at 816 Blair Street in Cleveland off Belcher. The telephone number is 281/593-2526. Meals and shelter are provided, but special needs individuals can not be accepted at this shelter. If you know someone with special needs needing shelter, you may contact Cleveland Emergency Operating Center at 281/592-2622 for assistance.

Debris removal will begin as early as this Saturday, September 20. Three passes will be made in each Cleveland neighborhood approximately five days apart. In order to take advantage of this service, you will need to separate the debris in the following manner: **Household trash** (garbage); **tree and yard debris** (does not have to be cut or bundled); **construction debris** (carpet, wood, etc.); and **white goods** (refrigerators, any items with Freon, etc.) If the debris is mixed, neither the debris contractors nor Waste Management will pick up your storm debris or household garbage.

In an effort to help citizens who need to make repairs, building and electrical permits will be issued from Cleveland EOC (Cleveland Police Department, 226 Peach Street) from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It is planned that City Hall will be open as normal on Monday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and permits will then be issued from City Hall.

Cleveland City Hall plans to open Monday, September 22, 'business as usual' from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, Austin Memorial Library reopening may be delayed if the shelter remains active as that staff is involved in supervising the shelter.

A special called City Council meeting at Cleveland City Hall is scheduled for Tuesday, September 23 at 7:00 p.m. to consider items including the FY '09 budget.