



TOWNSHIP OF HILLSBOROUGH

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Collaborative Effort Brings Aid to Municipality

Hillsborough Township Took the Initiative to Work with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Somerset County to Secure Resources in the Wake of Super Storm Sandy

In the days following Super Storm Sandy, municipalities across the State of New Jersey were faced with the daunting task of clean-up and restoration of epic proportions.

Tapping into resources from the state and national government was instrumental in the clean-up effort of our Hillsborough Community.

Hillsborough Township was one of the municipalities within Somerset County that took the initiative to apply for and ultimately received National assistance through the following programs: FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a \$15.6 million National Emergency Grant obtained by the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the New Jersey State Youth Corps.

It was a collaborative effort on behalf of our Township, Somerset County, the Department of Labor and the Christie Administration to secure both the local and national resources.

FEMA was one of the first organizations to arrive on the scene in Hillsborough, when shortly after the storm, a team of Iron Wood Hotshots from Arizona descended upon the Township for six (6) days with their chainsaws in hand to clear fallen and uprooted trees throughout the area.

In the days immediately following the storm, Hillsborough's Administrator Anthony Ferrera also started the process to secure assistance through the state Labor Department, which provided members of its Youth Corps program for a myriad of tasks in the Township as part of the \$15.6 million National Emergency Grant to help communities throughout New Jersey in their clean-up and recovery efforts.

National Emergency Grants are part of the United States Secretary of Labor's discretionary fund and are awarded based on a state's ability to meet specific guidelines. These grants can be utilized by approved municipalities, county governments and state agencies to assist with the continuing clean-up and humanitarian work resulting from a disaster.

The \$15.6 million grant obtained by the Christie Administration just days after Sandy hit is providing temporary employment for individuals working on projects for the clean-up, demolition, repair, renovation and reconstruction of damaged public structures, facilities and lands. Additional temporary jobs may also be created for those working on projects that provide food, clothing, shelter and other humanitarian assistance for disaster victims.

In Somerset County, the process of recruiting and screening potential workers under the grant was taken on by Greater Raritan Workforce Investment Board, an arm of the county administration. They, in turn, worked with individual municipalities, such as Hillsborough, that applied for the grant funds.

Hillsborough had to identify relief, restoration and clean-up projects and determine how to deploy the workers to be hired under the grant. It was the Greater Raritan One Stop Career Center, operated by the Workforce Investment Board, who handled the recruiting, screening and hiring of the employees who were eventually enlisted by communities such as Hillsborough.

It was a win-win for everyone. Hillsborough Township received much needed resources after the storm and unemployed individuals were able to secure those temporary positions to allow them to re-enter the workplace.

By early December, temporary workers were brought in to assist the hard work already begun by the Hillsborough Department of Public Works and the Parks Department in the clean-up efforts. Hillsborough's share of the National Emergency Grant enabled the township to enlist eleven (11) workers to assist with the cleanup efforts for public lands in the 54 square mile township.

Hillsborough is still utilizing these individuals as the weather permits.

The grant program was open to people who were unemployed as a direct result of the storm or who were among New Jersey's long-term unemployed and no longer received unemployment benefits. Individuals who met the requirements were given temporary assignments throughout Somerset County.

Another service utilized by Hillsborough after Sandy was the New Jersey Youth Corps; one of the largest youth service and conservation corps in the United States. The Youth Corps is a year-round voluntary program, funded and managed through the state Labor Department, which engages young adults, ages 16 through 25, in fulltime community service, training and educational activities.

Guided by a staff of people who serve as mentors and role models, the teams or "crews" perform a wide range of public service projects. In the process of their community work, the Youth Corps

members receive educational development, obtain support services, find personal and career counseling, and learn employment and life skills.

In Hillsborough, the crews were utilized to aid senior and disabled residents with debris removal.

We consider ourselves fortunate to have had the numerous resources available to our community.

On Thursday, January 24, 2013, Hillsborough Township hosted Labor Commissioner Harold J. Wirths, as I joined him to tour some of the worksites within our community that were being addressed by the crews.

As of this writing, 512 requests for clean-up assistance have been addressed within the Township by the NEG workers and Youth Corps in conjunction with Hillsborough's Department of Public Works. In total 30,000 cubic yards to date, of storm debris has been collected.

The FEMA crew that was initially deployed cleared 94 hazardous trees (leaning, blocking pathways, etc.). The trees ranged from 20-80 feet in height and were cut up in manageable sections for further cleanup.

The Commissioner chose Hillsborough Township as an area to tour in the ongoing Sandy recovery efforts in New Jersey in large part due to our participation in the Department of Labor programs. The January 24th tour included a visit to the Township's debris facility and a stop at a rural location where the National Emergency Grant workers had recently been working.
