



***Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Transitional Assistance***


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Secretary

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Lieutenant Governor

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Commissioner

**Online Guide Transmittal 2018-74  
September 28, 2018**

**To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff**  
**From:  Paul Sutliff, Assistant Commissioner for Programs and Field Operations**  
**Re: Cross Programs: Greater Lawrence Disaster Efforts**  
**Overview**

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On September 13, 2018 a series of gas related explosions and fires made approximately 60 homes unlivable and left 8,700 residents and businesses without heat, hot water, and/or cooking gas in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover. Governor Baker declared a state of emergency and relief efforts for those impacted were immediately underway.

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- an extended date to request replacement SNAP benefits due to household misfortune;
  - the procedures for SSI recipients to request vouchers for certain lost household items;
  - the Unemployment Insurance claim process for those in the affected areas;
  - where to find available resources for impacted clients; and
  - exploring good cause eligibility for those in the affected areas.
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**SNAP  
Benefits**

Current SNAP clients may request replacement benefits due to food lost as a result of a household misfortune. Typically this loss must be reported, orally or in writing, to the Department within 10 days of the loss. It is important to immediately note in a case narrative the date the client reports the loss.

**Due to the impact of the disaster FNS has approved a waiver and has extended the reporting date for clients who experienced a loss due to this disaster to October 8<sup>th</sup>. Clients have an additional 10 days to submit the SNAP-9B form. October 18<sup>th</sup> is the last date to submit the SNAP-9B form, if they reported the loss on the last day of October 8<sup>th</sup>.**

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**Disaster  
Benefits for  
Certain SSI  
Recipients**

In instances of a disaster beyond an individual's control, DTA may authorize payment to SSI recipients for replacement of certain items lost due to disaster.

The SSI recipient does not need to be a SNAP or economic assistance client to make this request. The SSI Disaster Benefits Request form has been developed to assist SSI recipients in making this request, but the use of this specific form is not required. The written request or form will be processed by staff in the Central Eligibility and Processing (CEP) Unit. If you receive the request from an SSI recipient, provide the documentation to your TAO manager who will email the request to the CEP Unit. Verification of the loss must be in the form of a MEMA report where possible, or an affidavit or a report from the Red Cross. This information must be documented in the ECF.

The benefits are issued in the form of a vendor payment and at the rates indicated on the SSI Disaster Benefits Request form attached to this Transmittal.

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**Lump Sum**

A reminder that any lump sums, awards or insurance payouts related to this disaster are to be considered non-countable for eligibility purposes.

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**Unemployment  
Insurance  
Claims**

Any person who worked or lived in the area affected by the recent disaster, who is now unable to return to work as a result of this disaster, may file a claim for unemployment benefits. Formal layoff notices from their employer will not be required to file a claim for unemployment benefits.

The ValleyWorks Career Center of Lawrence can assist any residents with questions about this process.

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**Good Cause**

Clients in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover may have missed and may continue to miss work participation hours due to these extraordinary circumstances beyond their control. Additionally, clients may need assistance in obtaining verifications due to this disruption. Staff are reminded, as always, to assist clients in obtaining necessary verifications including making collateral contacts.

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**Greater  
Lawrence  
Resources**

Outside of TAO and FAW operations, the DTA has provided support for those impacted through efforts at the Recovery Resource Center in Lawrence and by partnering with other state and local groups in the establishment of the Greater Lawrence Disaster Relief Fund. This has included the compiling of local resources across a wide number of categories. Information on the Fund can be found on the Essex County Community Foundation website: [www.eccf.org](http://www.eccf.org) and the resource guide will be made available there.

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**Questions**

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email the DTA Mailbox.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.

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Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

SSI Disaster Benefits Request

Give this form to DTA
• By Mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420
• By fax: (617) 887-8765
• Upload to the DTA Connect App

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for request: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested Item(s)

Kitchen furniture:

- Table and 4 chairs (\$107)
Refrigerator (\$224)
Stove (\$229 plus installation when necessary)

Bedroom Furniture:

- Bed (total \$130 for a twin or full mattress, box spring and frame)
Dresser (\$89 when no other storage space available)

Living Room Furniture:

- Hardwood Frame Chairs (2 per home, \$52 each)
Lamps (1 per room, \$16 each, only when no other means of lighting)

Household Equipment and Supplies:

- Utensils, Linen, Pillows, Small Appliances (\$114 for the first member \$40 for each additional family member on SSI )
Food (\$50)
Clothing (\$103 per eligible SSI family member)
Moving costs (\$150)

Other:

- Hot Water Heater (\$191)
Parlor Heater (No central heating) Cost as stated by local gas company. When not furnished by landlord

A MEMA report or an affidavit or a report from the Red Cross for the need for these replacement items must be submitted.

Signature

Date