



## Connecticut Department of Social Services

# NEWS RELEASE

Media contact: David Dearborn  
860-424-5024; [david.dearborn@ct.gov](mailto:david.dearborn@ct.gov)

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*'SNAP' Recipients Eligible for Food Replacement Benefits After Tropical Storm Irene*

## STATE GETS FEDERAL AID FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS HIT BY STORM FOOD SPOILAGE

**HARTFORD** – Over 208,000 low-income Connecticut households enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are getting help to replace food spoiled by power outage or flooding from Tropical Storm Irene, Social Services Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby announced today.

“On behalf of the Malloy Administration, the Department of Social Services is working with the federal government to extend the storm-related safety net to residents enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP,” Commissioner Bremby said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service has approved over \$13 million in replacement benefits for Connecticut households enrolled in SNAP, a 100% federally-funded program formerly known as food stamps.

The federal approval authorizes replacement benefits equal to 25% of SNAP beneficiaries’ monthly allocation for August – which means a one-time boost ranging from \$4 to over \$300, depending on income and household size. The average replacement benefit is estimated at \$62, Commissioner Bremby said.

The Department of Social Services electronically transmitted the replacement benefits to clients’ accounts this week. ATM-style cards are used to buy only federally-approved food items at supermarkets and grocery stores. To be eligible, clients had to be enrolled in SNAP at the time Tropical Storm Irene hit Connecticut.

“The federal approval for an across-the-board 25% replacement benefit for SNAP-eligible households in Connecticut is due in large part to the extensive and lengthy power outages that affected so many areas of the state,” Commissioner Bremby said. “With enrollment continuing to grow in the current economy, we believe this extra benefit will be especially helpful to thousands of families who lost food and are struggling to make ends meet at the lowest income level.”

### **Individual SNAP replacement benefits can be requested**

Commissioner Bremby also announced federal approval of an extra step to assist SNAP beneficiaries who lost food as a result of Tropical Storm Irene. The cost of food originally purchased with SNAP benefits and spoiled through power outage, flooding or other Irene-related damage can be reimbursed within certain parameters.

To be eligible for this extra, ‘individual’ SNAP replacement benefit, the value of the spoiled food items must be more than 25% of the household’s August SNAP allocation. In that case, an individual or family can report the net value of spoiled food that was purchased with SNAP benefits, and request additional replacement SNAP benefits. The total amount of replacement benefits (including the 25% automatically issued this week) cannot be more than what the household received in August.

The request is made in two steps. First, recipients must report that they have incurred food loss by calling 2-1-1 (toll-free); or logging in and registering at [www.211ct.org](http://www.211ct.org). The deadline for making this report of food loss is September 19 at midnight.

Second, recipients must fill out and return a SNAP replacement form within 10 days of the date they report the loss. The replacement form will be mailed to people who report food losses by the September 19 deadline, in accordance with federal timeframes.

The Department of Social Services will then compute the amount of individual replacement benefits, and make deposits to eligible households’ electronic benefit transfer accounts.

#### **‘Disaster SNAP’ plan to bring further benefits**

In a third step to help Connecticut residents cope with the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene, Commissioner Bremby has activated the state’s plan for the **Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**. This has the potential to extend federal SNAP benefits to many households not currently enrolled in the food program.

“Pending federal approval, this would be the first time Connecticut has launched the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” Commissioner Bremby said. “Massachusetts put its plan into action after the June 1 tornado, and we are laying the groundwork to help many Connecticut residents who lost food and incurred other non-reimbursable expenses resulting from Tropical Storm Irene.

Eligibility would depend on income and asset levels to be announced, pending federal approval.

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Finally, in another move to help cushion the tropical storm’s impact, Commissioner Bremby earlier directed that monthly food and cash assistance benefits to be available to all clients on Thursday, September 1 – up to two days sooner for many families and individuals.

Monthly benefit allotments were replenished electronically for all clients on the first of the month – rather than over the first three days of the month by alphabetical breakdown, as is normally done.

DSS took the action to make sure that families and individuals could get food and cash benefits as soon as possible, on the assumption that many are especially hard-pressed for these basic needs due to power outage and other hurricane-related problems.

The services involved are SNAP; Temporary Family Assistance; State Supplement for the Aged/Blind/Disabled; and State-Administered General Assistance.

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