



NEWS FROM
SENATOR

JAMES L. SEWARD
51st SENATE DISTRICT

&

ASSEMBLYMAN

PETE LOPEZ
127th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Contact: Allison Scott (518) 455-5981



**SENATOR JAMES SEWARD, ASSEMBLYMAN PETE LOPEZ
BRING D.F.S. SUPERINTENDENT LAWSKY
TO FOCUS ON CRITICAL INSURANCE ISSUES IN THE WAKE OF IRENE**

Assemblyman Pete Lopez (R,C,I-Schoharie) and Senator James L. Seward (R,C,I-Oneonta), working with the governor's office, recently brought Benjamin M. Lawsky, Superintendent of the state Department of Financial Services, to tour the damage of Tropical Storm Irene throughout the Schoharie Valley and Catskills and meet with local officials to help ensure residents have the best assistance from the new state agency, which will assume the duties of the state Department of Insurance.

"Families and businesses in communities devastated by recent storms are determined to rebuild," said Senator Seward. "There are a great number of stakeholders pulling together to revive our communities and I am confident the insurance industry along with government will play significant roles moving forward."

"The importance of the insurance issue cannot be overstated," said Assemblyman Lopez. "The devastation of Irene and, most recently, Hurricane Lee have pushed homeowners, farmers and employers to the brink. They are making decisions now whether to stay and rebuild their lives and futures in the region or simply walk away."

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Senator Seward and Assemblyman Lopez have been working together with local, state and federal officials to ensure a quick and thorough response throughout the region, which includes the hardest hit counties of the 21 New York State counties that have since been declared disaster sites due to storm and flooding damage. A particular concern is the ability of homeowners and employers to ensure damage is covered by their insurance companies, especially since many residents did not have flood insurance.

To help better ensure New Yorkers affected by the storms and floods have assistance when dealing with their insurance companies, the Senator and Assemblyman brought Superintendent Lawsky to view the widespread damage in the Schoharie Valley and Catskills firsthand. As a result, the pair are pleased to announce that the Superintendent is setting up Mobile Command Centers in Greene and Schoharie counties to help residents and employers with insurance-related concerns.

The state Department of Insurance Mobile Command Center will be in Windham (491 County Route 12) on Monday, September 12 until 8 pm and on Main Street (across the street from the post office) in Middleburgh on Tuesday, September 13 until 6 pm. Assemblyman Lopez also is hoping to bring Insurance Department representatives to his Town Hall Meeting for Windham, Ashland and Prattsville area residents and employers, which is still scheduled to be held at the Windham Center Property this Thursday, September 15 at 7 pm.

While Senator Seward and Assemblyman Lopez continue to urge residents or employers in need to contact any of their offices for any assistance, they also recommend that those with insurance-related questions contact the state Department of Insurance's special Irene Insurance Help Hotline by calling 1-800-339-1759. The hotline will be staffed with insurance professionals Monday through Friday from 8 am until 8 pm until further notice and can help residents and employers not only with property damage but health insurance-related concerns as well as auto insurance. Additional information also can be found on the department's website at www.ins.state.ny.us.

As residents and employers are returning to their homes and businesses, Senator Seward and Assemblyman Lopez encourage constituents to take photos of the damage and document all conversations with your insurance representatives, as well as to use every precaution to keep themselves safe, including wearing gloves and masks, proper waterproof footwear and being wary of fallen materials such as tree limbs, power lines, and building debris. For more cleanup tips and assistance, please visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) website at www.disasterassistance.gov or www.fema.gov or by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Assemblyman Lopez said, "If sufficient funds are not made available and government is unable to fill the gap, we face dramatic changes in the fabric of our communities. We must do everything possible to preserve our communities."

Pictured above from left: Hubies Pizzeria owner, Chris Hubbard, discusses storm damage following Tropical Storm Irene with Senator Seward, Assemblyman Lopez and Superintendent Lawsky. The state officials along with other insurance department representatives toured several hard-hit Schoharie County businesses and homes and met with local municipal officials to discuss ongoing recovery needs.