

# Gov. Walker: Announces no-interest loans now available for southwestern Wisconsin business owners affected by flooding

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WEDC awards \$605,000 grant for loan program to assist small businesses in paying for restoration and related costs

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker today announced the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has awarded a \$605,000 grant to the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to provide no-interest loans to small businesses in southwestern Wisconsin that were impacted by the recent flooding. Businesses in nine counties will be eligible for microloans of up to \$15,000, which will provide them with a short-term source of funds for repair work and operating expenses until more long-term recovery funding can be secured. The loans have a two-year repayment period, with payments deferred for at least six months.

“This funding will provide much-needed relief to businesses in the region as they continue to recover from impact of the severe weather and flooding that hit the area,” said Governor Walker. “A disaster like this has the potential to have a devastating impact on small businesses, and this short-term funding will help offset cleanup-related expenses and other costs.”

Under the new Disaster Recovery Microloan Program, WEDC awards grants to its regional partners, which in turn issue loans to local businesses. Earlier this month, WEDC awarded a \$755,000 grant to the Madison Region Economic Partnership to

assist businesses in south-central Wisconsin and the agency expects to award another grant soon to the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The three regional organizations represent the areas of the state that were hit hardest by the flooding and severe weather in late August and early September.

MRRPC is now accepting loan applications from businesses impacted by the severe weather. To be eligible for a loan, a business must be located in or directly adjacent to the MRRPC region – Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce Trempealeau and Vernon counties. Businesses also must have suffered measurable physical damage because of the disaster and must intend to resume business operations in the community as quickly as possible.

The loans can be used for procurement of cleanup and restoration services, operating expenses, temporary space, and repair and reconstruction work. Applications can be downloaded at [mrrpc.com](http://mrrpc.com).

“These loans will help maintain key businesses that are needed in our rural communities,” said Greg Flogstad, director of MRRPC. “We appreciate WEDC’s foresight in setting up this program not only for this disaster but for future disasters as well.”

Four counties in the region have been declared federal disaster areas by President Trump: Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon. More than 100 businesses in those four counties sustained more than \$7.6 million in damages, according to Wisconsin Emergency Management. In Vernon County alone, 82 businesses suffered \$6.4 million in damage, including 46 that sustained major damage.

The WEDC Board of Directors in September approved the new program after businesses and homes in 18 counties were damaged in late August and early September following several weeks of intense storms, tornados and heavy rainfall across much of southern and central Wisconsin. These storms produced devastating flash flooding in multiple regions, resulted in seven dam failures, and caused several lakes and rivers to spill out of their banks and damage homes, bridges and roads.

More than 300 businesses statewide sustained nearly \$34 million in damage, while more than 1,300 homes sustained more than \$25 million in damages, according to Wisconsin Emergency Management. At Governor Walker’s request, President Trump on Oct. 19 declared that individuals and businesses in eight counties would be

eligible for federal disaster assistance: Crawford, Dane, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Sauk and Vernon. Several other counties that had damage from flooding or tornadoes are still under review by federal officials.

The U.S. Small Business Administration also has opened Business Recovery Centers in Dane, Juneau and Vernon counties to help businesses affected by severe weather. SBA representatives at the centers can provide information about disaster loans, answer questions and assist businesses in completing the SBA application. To find center locations and hours, visit [sba.gov/node/1629868](https://sba.gov/node/1629868).