



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Disaster assistance available to those affected by Front Street fire**

GEORGETOWN COUNTY, S.C. — Those who lost homes and livelihoods in the fire that ravaged the 700 block of Front Street in the City of Georgetown on Sept. 25 may be eligible for low-interest disaster relief loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, the agency told Georgetown County officials today.

Jeanne A. Hulit, SBA acting administrator, made the loans available in response to a letter from Gov. Nikki Haley on Oct. 3, requesting a disaster declaration by the SBA. The declaration covers Georgetown County, plus the adjacent counties of Berkeley, Charleston, Horry, Marion and Williamsburg.

“The SBA is strongly committed to providing the people of South Carolina with the most effective and customer-focused response possible to assist homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes with federal disaster loans,” Hulit said. “Getting businesses and communities up and running after a disaster is our highest priority at SBA.”

This move by the SBA makes loans up to \$200,000 available to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for loans up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property, said Frank Skaggs, director of SBA’s Field Operations Center East in Atlanta. SBA’s customer service representatives are available at the Disaster Loan Outreach Center to answer questions about the disaster loan program and help individuals complete their applications.

The center is located in Rooms 218 and 219 of the historic Georgetown County Courthouse, 129 Screven St., Georgetown. It will be open Tuesday, Oct. 8, through Thursday, Oct. 10, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The fire on Front Street destroyed seven historic buildings and damaged one more. It left 13 people homeless and 130 without jobs.

“This was a blessing for the people who were affected by that fire,” said Sam Hodge, Georgetown County’s emergency manager. “Some of them lost everything. I know there are a lot of people who will be incredibly grateful for this designation by the SBA and the support of Gov. Haley, which made it possible.”

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“Businesses and non-profit organizations of any size may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets,” according to Elliott Cooper, SBA’s South Carolina district director.

Applicants may be eligible for a loan amount increase up to 20 percent of their physical damages, as verified by the SBA, to make improvements that help prevent the risk of future property damage caused by a similar disaster.

For small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small aquaculture businesses and most private non-profit organizations of all sizes, the SBA offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster. EIDL assistance is available regardless of whether the business suffered any physical property damage.

Interest rates are as low as 1.937 percent for homeowners and renters, 2.875 percent for non-profit organizations and 4 percent for businesses with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each applicant’s financial condition.

### How to apply

Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA’s secure website at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

Individuals and businesses unable to visit the center may also obtain information and loan applications by calling the SBA’s Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 (1-800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing), or by emailing [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov).

Loan applications can also be downloaded at [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster). Completed applications should be returned to the center or mailed to: U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

The filing deadline to return applications for physical property damage is **December 3, 2013**. The deadline to return economic injury applications is **July 7, 2014**.

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