

Dear Concerned Citizens,

This newsletter, which contains some hopeful news, is important for the following Road Home applicants:

1. Applicants with unresolved dispute resolution cases or clearly faulty appeals decisions and real, substantive mistakes in processing their grant applications or wrong grant amounts

- applicants who tried to dispute their grant (sent back their option letter questioning their grant amount) or tried to appeal and were left in limbo
- applicants who disputed their grant amount or status or appealed it but were never given a full copy of their file to know the details of what they were disputing or appealing
- applicants who never had a chance to appeal or were told that they had to drop their appeal but did tell Road Home that they questioned the grant award amount or their status

2. Applicants who intend to elevate their homes

3. Those interested in the discussion of a possible Road Home "surplus" at Housing Task Force meeting on Feb. 6.

1. Applicants with unresolved dispute resolution cases or clearly faulty appeals decisions

Please do contact LRA as described below

- v if you have a legitimate reason to dispute your grant because you think that Road Home made a mistake in processing your grant.

Please do not use this new avenue for help to

- v if you do not have a reason to dispute your grant according to Road Home regulations
 - v or if you did not previously contact Road Home to try to initiate a dispute resolution or appeal.
- Call LRA at 225.342.1700 and have your application number and very short description of your problem ready if you have reason to believe that there was a mistake made in calculating your grant or determining your eligibility.
 - o http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2009/02/louisiana_recovery_authority_d.html

LRA task force discusses future of Road Home 12:37 PM, Feb. 6, 2009

Louisiana Recovery Authority disputes Road Home contractor legal bills 9:30 PM, Feb. 6, 2009

by David Hammer, The Times-Picayune

"More than eight months after it last met to discuss the Road Home program, the Louisiana Recovery Authority's housing task force met in New Orleans today to address the program's final stages.

The task force is chaired by LRA board member Walter Leger and includes several homeowner advocates, including Melanie Ehrlich and K.C. King from the Citizens Road Home Action Team and Nell Bolton from the Jeremiah Group. The meeting was at University of New Orleans' Lindy Boggs Center."

"... something to help an unknown number of homeowner applicants who apparently fell prey to multiple changes in the program, particularly those who complained to ICF about allegedly undervalued grants in an informal process known as dispute resolution that has since been eliminated. Ehrlich says she still hears from applicants who never filed formal appeals because they were "stuck" in dispute resolution."

"... Rainwater eventually agreed to post on the LRA's Web site, www.lra.louisiana.gov, a message encouraging Road Home applicants who feel they were trapped by old rules to contact the state agency so they might be given a new right to appeal. {My request was to post this information at **the Road Home website**, road2la.org, to which, I am glad to say, Paul Rainwater agreed.}

"... Rainwater said applicants who feel they were trapped by old rules should contact the LRA. The agency's phone number is 225.342.1700. "

- **CHAT strongly recommends that if you call LRA as described above, you also fill out our survey**

To take CHAT's online applicant survey: ([click here](#)) or find the link to the survey near the top of our website page <http://chatushome.com>

Tell us in the survey what mistake or mistakes were made in processing your Road Home application and when you called the LRA number above.

If you took the survey before, just please take it again and fill out the most important parts for your case.

Be sure to give us your contact information and to check the box in the survey about sharing information with RH officials.

ü No, you can send my survey with my identifying information (to RH officials)

Walter Leger, Chairman of the Housing Task Force, asked me to forward to him information about applicants who have unresolved problems that are due to Road Home mistakes. He might be able to ask for help on your behalf if you were short-changed in violation of the rules of RH.

As a result of Mr. Rainwater's pledge, one question for the near future will be the number of appeals in process.

Currently, the number of appeals is as follows.

http://road2la.org/Docs/pipeline/Week_133_Combined_Report.pdf p. 14

Appeals

As of January 15, 2009, 15,135 cases have been processed through the Appeals department, 14,460 have been resolved, and 675 are active. Table 14 shows the status of these cases.

The other critical question will be how independent and careful the appeals are.

Applicants are showing us appeals rejection decisions that:

§ do not address their questions at all;

§ do not involve real re-evaluation de novo {from scratch} of wrong starting data, such as obviously wrong or inconsistent Housing Team Evaluation data;

§ or did not allow appropriate input of data from applicants to correct RH errors.

It is noteworthy that from Aug. - Dec. 2007, about 49-55% of the appeals were won by the applicants (2,799 resolved appeals).

In all of 2008 - Jan., 2009, about 33% of the appeals were won by the applicants (11, 661 resolved appeals).

2. Applicants who intend to elevate their homes

I learned from a very productive 1-hour conference call on Feb. 5 with Lara Robertson, Deputy Director, and Bill Haygood, HMGP specialist for LRA, and from the HTF meeting the next day the following.

RH applicants who are demolishing their home and elevating their new home (called applicants to the Reconstruction Pilot program) will have their HMGP elevation grant calculated on the basis of the following:

- total allowable costs to build and elevate the home
- minus total assistance received, including insurance benefits, ICC, and RH elevation incentive award, RH compensation grant, RH additional compensation grant).
- There is no ceiling of \$150,000 on compensation received,
- just the ceiling of no more than \$30,000 for the HMGP elevation grant and this MIGHT be increased in the future.

So, if you are building a brand new house and elevating, you should apply for the HMGP elevation award even if your total elevation costs are not more than your total ICC and RH elevation award amount.

This could be especially helpful for people struggling to make ends meet to rebuild.

If you did not apply for HMGP elevation money, you can still do so.

v Contact: 877 744 7235; 225 339 3746; hazardmitigation@la.gov

If you did apply for HMGP elevation funding, and did not start elevating before March 15, 2007,

v it is important to determine your FEMA eligibility before you start elevating or you may lose that eligibility.

Contact: 877 744 7235; 225 339 3746; hazardmitigation@la.gov

§ and ask them if you have FEMA eligibility.

§ Write down the name of anyone you talk to and the date.

§ Save any emails to or from them.

- Save any bills, receipts, copies of permits, architectural plans, floor plans, and invoices or other documentation that you receive about your demolition, rebuilding, and elevating of your newly built home.

RH applicants who are repairing their hurricane/flood-damaged home and elevating it will have their HMGP elevation grant determined by allowable elevation costs minus RH elevation incentive award and minus ICC money (I think just the portion of ICC money for elevation, not the portion for demolition). The maximum amount of the HMGP grant is now.

- Save all receipts, invoices, and permits, and any other information about elevating your home.

Other news about elevation grants

- 1) I was told that, as per my request, the Road Home website (road2la.org) would shortly have a link at home page for elevation grant information, including specific details of HMGP elevation grant requirements and calculations).
- 2) The certificate of occupancy is no longer being required before applicants get the final payment of the HMGP elevation grant.
- 3) The new rule that applicants are not eligible for an HMGP grant if their new home is 10% larger (or more than 10% larger) than their original home is now under reconsideration. We hope to see that rule dropped but have to await further notification to find out if this will happen.
- 4) Even if you got a grant of zero, but were eligible for Type 1, you are eligible for HMGP
- 5) To try to get approval for cost of an elevator in an HMGP elevation grant, you need to submit a medical note.

3. Housing Task Force Chairman Walter Leger stated unambiguously that RH homeowner grant funds would be used only for helping RH homeowner applicants.

This was said to the public at the LRA Housing Task Force meeting on Feb. 6, at UNO.

This was a welcome statement, which apparently reverses the LRA policy set forth in the LRA Board resolution of Nov., 2008

<http://www.lra.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/meetings/2008/11/111808AppropriationResolution.pdf>

It would also be consistent with the statement made by LRA Housing Policy Director, Will Jacobs, at the Feb. 6., 2009 Housing Task Force meeting. He stated in response to a question that all RH Rental Grant money will be used for RH Rental Programs. For example, he reported that policies were being formulated to use some otherwise unappropriated RH Rental Program funds for direct loans to landlords under stipulated conditions, that are being established currently.

Best wishes,

Melanie Ehrlich

Co-chairman, Citizens' Road Home Action Team (CHAT)

<http://chatushome.com>

PS: To contact us by email, please do not use reply to sender

Send emails to chatlra@yahoo.com