CIRAS Makes Sure Iowa Industry Gets Fair Share of Funding to Rebuild

AMES, Iowa – The floods of 2008 will have a significant impact on Iowa’s industry and economy. With the potential for millions of dollars in disaster relief coming into the state, Iowa State University Extension’s Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) is identifying the areas where funding will have the greatest impact for industry to rebuild and return to normal production.

“We’ve heard estimates that there will be hundreds of millions of dollars flowing into Iowa from many different federal agencies. We want to make certain that a fair share of these funds is targeted to Iowa businesses and industry,” according to CIRAS director Ron Cox. “We are gathering information from hundreds of manufacturers, aggregating it and providing that information to government agencies so that the new funds effectively reach those companies in need. We also are hoping to understand company-specific problems so that ISU can effectively provide one-on-one assistance.”

Added CIRAS project manager Rudy Pruszko, “CIRAS can act as a collective voice for Iowa industry.”

Pruszko said CIRAS already has surveyed 575 Iowa companies. Fifty percent of those companies said they have been affected by the flooding. Companies are reporting disruptions to their workforce and are dealing with supply, customer, utilities, communication and road and rail transportation issues. They also report damage to buildings, offices and machinery.

“Forty-four percent reported nearly $25.3 million in capital damage,” he said.

In addition, CIRAS is collaborating with federal, state and local agencies and private organizations to map the industry emergency management services that are available to Iowa companies. The map will include descriptions of which entity provides assistance at which stage of recovery and how to navigate through the maze of organizations.

“Our goal is to decrease the negative economic impact of flooding on industry and Iowa,” Cox said.

Iowa business and industry face three critical obstacles that need immediate resolution: clean-up, transportation and workforce issues.

“They’ve got to clean up the damage. At the same time, they’re dealing with closed roads and railways and washed-out bridges — many have reported difficulty in receiving and shipping product,” Cox said.

“If a company is not in operation, the staff must determine if they should seek employment elsewhere. Companies that are operating may be faced with staff shortages. Many of their workers are dealing with damaged homes, preventing them from returning to work even if the industry has not been directly affected with flood or tornado damage,” Cox added.
Visit the CIRAS Web site, www.ciras.iastate.edu, for industry emergency management information. The site will be updated as new information becomes available. When the industry survey is completed, the results also will be available on the Web site. For assistance or further information on CIRAS’ efforts, contact Ruth Wilcox at rwilcox@iastate.edu or (515) 290-1134.

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