? ? The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has declared the counties of Orange, Scott and Washington and the contiguous counties of Clark, Crawford, Dubois, Floyd, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson and Jennings disasters areas due to damages caused by severe storms and flooding that occurred March 18-20, 2008. Hill encourages those affected to apply for SBA physical damage and/or economic injury loans. The deadline to apply for Physical Disaster Loans is July 7, 2008. The deadline to apply for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is not until February 5, 2009.

"I am pleased that the SBA has allowed those affected by harsh weather to apply for compensation for the damages they incurred," Hill said. "A lot of people lost a lot of money because of this damage, and they are in need of some assistance."

The types of disaster loans available to affected persons are Home Disaster Loans, Business Physical Disaster Loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loans. Home Disaster Loans are described by SBA as loans to homeowners or renters to repair or replace disaster damaged real estate or personal property owned by the victim. Business Physical Disaster Loans are described by the SBA as loans to businesses to repair or replace disaster-damaged property owned by the business, including real estate, inventories, supplies, machinery and equipment. Businesses of any size are eligible. Non-profit organizations such as charities, churches, private universities, etc., are also eligible. Economic Injury Disaster Loans are described by the SBA as loans for working capital to small businesses and small agricultural cooperatives to assist them through the disaster recovery period. Interest rates are fixed for the term of all loans.

According to a release issued by the SBA, the most important step for disaster victims is to complete and turn in their SBA disaster loan application.

For assistance and more information, please contact the SBA Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 or http://www.sba.gov.

"I strongly encourage those affected to look into applying for these loans,: Hill said. "And, as always, if my office can be of any assistance please don't hesitate to contact me."