

# The Capital

## County may refund some rubble dumping fees

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

County victims of Tropical Storm Isabel could have some of their county rubble dumping fees reimbursed under a new emergency administration bill.

Homeowners whose primary residence was damaged could get up to \$1,000 back if the bill, co-sponsored Thursday by Councilmen Ron Dillon Jr., R-Pasadena, and Ed Reilly, R-Crofton, passes next month.

The county has earmarked some \$250,000, gleaned from year-end shifting of unspent county funds, to pay for the program.

But homeowners only have until June 7 to sign up for the money, available on a first-come first-served basis. The bill does not apply to landlords and renters.

"This is an appropriate gesture to help relieve the financial burdens that our residents face as they recover from Isabel," Mr. Reilly said.

Council Chairman C. Edward Middlebrooks, R-Severn, said he has not heard any opposition to the bill.

"The bill has a good purpose ... I expect it to pass," he said.

The council could pass the bill as early as its next meeting June 21.

Most of those suffering the worst property damage in the Sept. 18 storm were mailed an application and a letter explaining the program about two weeks ago.

"Reimbursing a portion of the disposal fees will help some of our hardest-hit hurricane victims," County Executive Janet S. Owens said in a statement.

The bill did not initially include residents of Annapolis. After hearing some complaints, county officials on Thursday consulted the Office of Law which said city residents could indeed be included.

"On Tuesday, working with the city inspector, we will contact all those city residents who might benefit from the program," said Jody Couser, a county spokesman.

Many families have been further frustrated by the county not being able to waive dump tipping fees, some of which add thousands of dollars to already devastating rebuilding bills, like Baltimore County did for its storm victims.

"It took them a while," said Dawn Darr, who is still living in a government trailer in Edgewater. "We are happy they are doing something, but it certainly does not match what Baltimore County did for their people."

She faxed her application in on Thursday. The Darrs' brick and block home was demolished last month and their tip fee was over \$1,000.

In the letter accompanying the new program application, Ms. Owens explained why the county did not waive the fees.

"As you may know, our landfill and resource recovery facilities are operated as an enterprise fund, which by law must be self-sustaining through user fees," she wrote. "There is no provision in the law that allows the county executive or any other staff member to waive tipping fees ... brought to our landfill by commercial haulers."

County Director of Community and Constituent Services Cecelia Fabula said the early deadline would help the county make as many payments as possible by the end of June.

Funds not spent by then will likely be carried over, and available to continue payouts in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

She said only people whose houses were demolished and hauled away would get the full \$1,000.

"First we will take care of those who lost their whole house. Then, for those who had lesser damage... we will try to make out a percentage," she said.

"It might seem like a token amount. I wish we could give them more money." ---

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