**USDA secretary says FSA offices couldn't open for storm**

Oct 18, 2013

STURGIS (AP) — U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack acknowledges his agency hasn't been able to do much for western South Dakota ranchers hit by an early October blizzard. He told KBHB-AM in Sturgis that livestock disaster assistance programs expired in 2011, so Congress needs to pass a new Farm Bill and make the financial help retroactive for losses due to the storm and drought.

Vilsack says he understands the frustrations of the state's congressional delegation and agriculture producers regarding the closure of Farm Service Agency offices when they're needed most. But he says he had no way to legally open FSA offices under the government shutdown. He says now that government's operating again, work can begin on helping out those hurt by the storm.

<http://www.mitchellrepublic.com/content/usda-secretary-says-fsa-offices-couldnt-open-storm>

**Daugaard says storm damage assessments slated** Oct 21, 2013

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard says damage assessments will begin next week for counties and tribal land impacted from an early October storm that dumped 4 feet or more of snow in some areas. Daugaard says the assessment by state, local and federal officials will begin on Oct. 28. The assessment will cover 15 storm-impacted counties and Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe reservations. The governor uses the results of the assessments to determine whether a request for a presidential disaster declaration is warranted. The storm knocked out power to about 30,000 people, closed roads and killed tens of thousands of cattle.

<http://www.mitchellrepublic.com/content/daugaard-says-storm-damage-assessments-slated>

**USDA to assist South Dakota ranchers recovering from blizzard**

Oct 22, 2013

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said on Tuesday it would provide assistance to South Dakota [livestock](http://www.reuters.com/finance/commodities/livestock?lc=int_mb_1001) producers to clean up from an early winter blizzard two weeks ago that killed tens of thousands of cattle. The agency would help producers dispose of [livestock](http://www.reuters.com/finance/commodities/livestock?lc=int_mb_1001) carcasses, replace destroyed fencing and rebuild shelters that were damaged by the storm, U.S. Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Michael Scuse told livestock producers in Rapid City, South Dakota.

The USDA said assistance could begin as early as this week. Between 15,000 and 30,000 cattle died in a storm that hit South Dakota in early October, according to state officials. The deaths are expected to result in tens of millions of dollars in lost income for ranchers.

Scuse said the federal government is entering an agreement with South Dakota to share the cost of deploying additional state and local personnel into the field. The partnership is expected to help producers conduct storm impact assessments on their operations and identify sites for carcass disposal. Producers have until November 15 to sign up for assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Scuse also encouraged producers to submit forms to the Farm Service Agency, documenting their losses in the hope that lawmakers in Washington will quickly pass a Farm Bill to reauthorize the livestock disaster assistance programs that have expired.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/22/us-usa-weather-cattle-idUSBRE99L1IS20131022>

**Sen. Johnson: Storm stories ‘difficult to describe’**

Oct 23, 2013

RAPID CITY — U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services Michael Scuse and other USDA officials met with western South Dakota producers Tuesday to discuss the impact of the October blizzard and how the federal government can assist in the recovery process.

 “Undersecretary Scuse and I spent much of today visiting areas of South Dakota that were hit by the blizzard earlier this month, and talking to producers that were affected by this terrible storm,” Johnson said Tuesday in a news release. “It’s difficult to describe the stories we heard. This storm killed tens of thousands of livestock, decimating some folks’ livelihoods.

“After a long and frustrating process, Congress was finally able to overcome the gridlock and come up with a good bipartisan solution to open the federal government and to get our USDA employees back into their offices. The most important thing that can happen now to aid in the recovery is for Congress to complete the farm bill with funding for the livestock disaster assistance programs. These programs won’t make producers whole again, but they will serve as a much-needed boost to help them recover.”

<http://www.mitchellrepublic.com/content/sen-johnson-storm-stories-difficult-describe>

**City of Rapid City could pay $3M to clean up after blizzard**

Oct 25, 2013

RAPID CITY (AP) — The cost of cleaning up Rapid City after an early October blizzard that dumped up to 4 feet of snow in western South Dakota could reach $3 million.

The city spent $200,000 removing about 2 ½ feet of snow from city streets — draining the 2013 snow removal budget. The city will make supplemental appropriations to cover the cost of snow removal the rest of the year, Mayor Sam Kooiker told KEVN-TV.

There also are costs associated with debris cleanup and staff overtime. Crews have trimmed about 1,700 storm-damaged trees in public right of ways, and the city has hired a contractor to do curbside pickup of brush and limbs from private properties.

"Those efforts are moving along swiftly," Public Works Director Terry Wolterstorff told the Rapid City Journal.

Officials hope to eventually recoup much of the cleanup cost through federal aid. That would require a presidential disaster declaration for the region, to pave the way for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"We're hopeful that 85 percent of the storm's cost will be picked up by FEMA, but we're not assured of that," Kooiker said. "And if it's not picked up by FEMA, then the entire $3 million will have to be picked up by the local taxpayers. Will it be a hit? Yes, it will. We do have reserve funds. That's what reserve funds are for. And we're confident that we'll come out strong."

<http://www.mitchellrepublic.com/content/city-rapid-city-could-pay-3m-clean-after-blizzard>

**FEMA Teams Surveying Blizzard, Flood Damage In SD**

October 30, 2013

Emergency Management Agency are working in western South Dakota to document the damage caused by an Oct. 4 blizzard. The storm dumped up to 4 feet of snow in the region, cutting power to about 30,000 customers, killing tens of thousands of cattle, and damaging or destroying buildings, trees and electrical system infrastructure.

Starting this week, 14 FEMA teams are visiting 15 counties and two American Indian reservations where public infrastructure and nonprofit entities suffered damage. Damage from flooding that followed the storm also is being assessed. The initial damage assessment is one of the steps necessary for federal aid. A final review would come later.

<http://www.keloland.com/newsdetail.cfm/fema-teams-surveying-blizzard-flood-damage-in-sd/?id=155326>