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Wildfire victims can take advantage of housing waiver

CHELAN/OKANOGAN COUNTIES — The Washington State Housing Finance Commission has issued a waiver that allows victims of recent Washington wildfires to more quickly access emergency housing.

People displaced by the wildfires, and who earn less than 60% of area median income, can now skip several time-consuming steps when applying for tax-credit apartments in Chelan and Okanogan counties. They can remain in the new housing through November 23 before having to reapply and meet the normal requirements.

“We hope this waiver can help alleviate just one of the hardships endured by those who have lost their homes,” said Karen Miller, chair of the Housing Finance Commission.

Under the waiver, wildfire victims who apply for tax-credit housing can simply self-certify that their income is under the required limits—generally, below 60% of median income in that area—instead of providing proof.

Families will still pay rent, and background and/or credit checks may still be required.

But the waiver will save up to a week of certifications and paperwork, removing one barrier for displaced families seeking temporary homes. They will then have until November 23, 2014, to reapply if they wish to stay.

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit has created or rehabilitated more than 68,000 affordable apartments across Washington state, in rural, suburban and urban areas alike.

Chelan and Okanogan counties, including the Colville Indian Reservation, have 19 tax-credit rental properties with 582 apartments.

These and other tax-credit properties, with details and contact information, can be found at www.aptfinder.org. Click “by program type” at right, then “Properties that offer Wash. State housing tax credit affordable apartments.” They can also be found on the Commission’s website at wshfc.org/property/property.asp.

“The first step should be to call the property you’re interested in to ask about vacancies, and to make sure your gross annual income makes you eligible,” said Melissa Donahue, manager of the Commission’s Asset Management and Compliance division.

The Housing Finance Commission last used this waiver to assist people displaced by the Oso mudslide earlier this year, and before that those displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

In a parallel move, the Washington State Department of Commerce is also temporarily waiving its requirements for Housing Trust Fund properties for households with incomes below 60% of the median.

Further information and links to housing resources for fire victims: wshfc.org/managers/resources.htm.

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The Washington State Housing Finance Commission is a publicly accountable, self-supporting team that brings private investment dollars to benefit families and achieve public goals throughout Washington. Over 30 years, the Commission has created and preserved affordable apartments and homeownership for more than 307,000 people across the state, while contributing more than \$42.5 billion and 240,000 jobs to the economy.

