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RREM home elevation grants not easy to come by: Seaside Park man still uneasy after signing for a \$91,000 home repair and elevation grant. iPHONE VIDEO BY KEN SERRANO



RREM home elevation grants not easy to come



One Seaside Park family's fight to rebuild

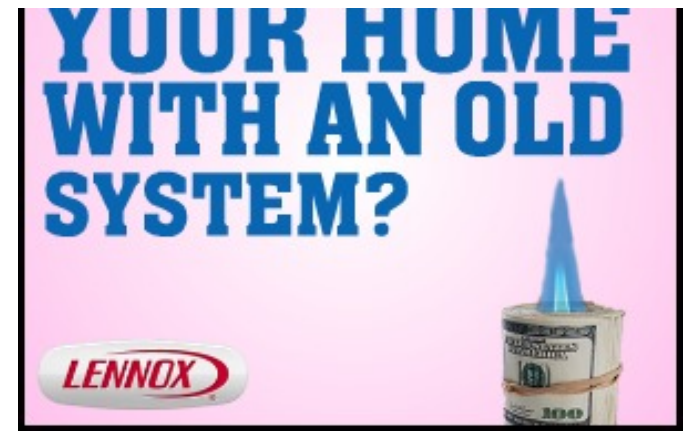


Written by **Ken Serrano**

@KenSerranoAPP

Standing in front of his Seaside Park home resting nine feet off the ground on blocks since May, Chuck Appleby clutched the papers from a signing ceremony for a state rebuilding grant with a tentative look of satisfaction.

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Appleby is not yet ready to celebrate his \$91,000 grant. The ceremony amounted to more of the same: paperwork.

The state [Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation \(RREM\)](#) program promises up to \$150,000 for homeowners to elevate and fix their Sandy-damaged homes. But for Appleby, a lot of questions remain before he actually gets the money.

“I wish I felt better about it,” Appleby said Wednesday after leaving the housing office in Lakewood, one of a few hundred people that have gotten this far in the process. “And I wish I would sleep better about it.”

Among those questions: when will a state-authorized contractor be able to start completing the work on his home? And then there is the state’s estimate of the damage and whether he will see his house made whole again. The wood floors and granite countertops that he once had might be in dispute, he said.

His grant amount could be increased to the maximum.

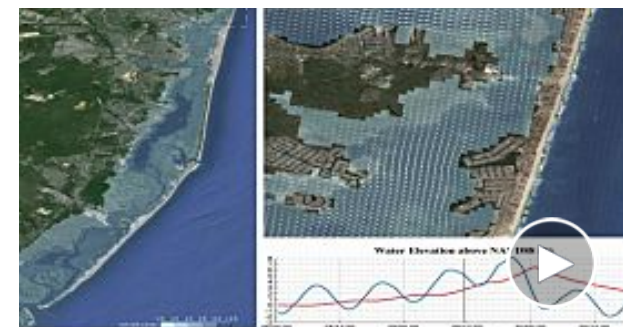
But since May, he has paid \$8,000 to \$9,000 renting the steel and cribbing under his raised home and another \$10,000 for renting a home in Lavallette, he said. Those costs will continue



Chuck Appleby, whose home in Seaside Park was flooded during Sandy and now sits 9 feet in the air, looks at the papers he signed today that approved a HUD grant to elevate his home. / BOB BIELK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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while he waits.

Slow start

Even with Appleby's months of uncertainty with the program, he is one of the lucky applicants.

In mid-July, the state [Department of Community Affairs](#), which oversees the grant programs, said it received 13,000 applications for the \$600 million RREM program and it estimated that 3,500 to 4,000 people would receive grants through a "randomized" system.

The process has not gone quickly.

The department has completed signings with 250 RREM applicants, granting them more than \$20 million, department spokeswoman Lisa Ryan said Wednesday in an email. Another \$5 million is being distributed as reimbursements for work done between the time Sandy made landfall and an application date.



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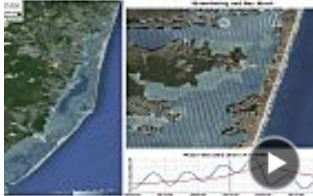
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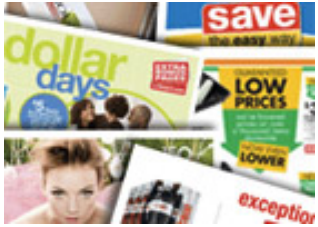
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