

BROOKLYN

Low-income renters in Brooklyn hit harder by Sandy than any other city neighborhood, new report shows

Thousands of Brighton Beach and Coney Island residents ask for federal aid

BY REUVEN BLAU / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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TODD MAISEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Charlene Davis shows mold buildup in her apartment after four feet of water flooded in.

Low income renters in two Brooklyn neighborhoods filed more Sandy FEMA claims than any other area in the city, a new report shows.

There have been 14,649 Brighton Beach renters and 12,764 in Coney Island who sought federal help for their damaged apartments, according to a report by Enterprise Community Partners, a national affordable housing organization.

Of those applications from residents in Brighton Beach and Coney Island, 69% were from low-income renters earning \$30,000 or less annually, the report said.

"The FEMA applications show Brooklyn's most vulnerable were hit the hardest," Enterprise deputy director Bomee Jung said.

That includes Charlene Davis whose Coney Island apartment was damaged by Sandy when four feet of water from Gravesend Bay flooded her home.

She used the roughly \$6,000 in FEMA money to restock basics like food and toilet paper and to replace furniture and six portable heaters at her 3310 Bayview Ave. home.

"It's cold but you can't keep the oven on forever," said Davis, 54, who can't afford to move so that mold can be removed and other repairs can be finished. "I had just finished paying for a brand new living room and dining room set before the storm."

The high number of Brooklyn FEMA claims is likely due to the dense neighborhoods in the 11235 and 11224 zip codes, according to area activists and pols. The two areas topped Far Rockaway, Rockaway Park and

Staten Island for having the most renters who applied for aid.



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Charlene Davis at her 3310 Bayview Avenue apartment building.

But it has been hard for cash-strapped charity groups to figure out how many renters have been struggling.

"Much of the reporting on Sandy victims has focused on homeowners. Yet, 55 percent of the surge victims in New York were very low-income renters, whose incomes are \$18,000 a year on average," said Max Weselcouch of the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. "These households were vulnerable before the storm, and programs to assist them will need to take their need for affordable housing into account in order for them to fully recover from the storm's damage."

Davis, a mother of four, is confined to a wheelchair, sleeps in a hospital bed, and carries around an oxygen tank.

"I'm using more oxygen and my doctor had to give me more antibiotics," she said.

Apartment owners have generally fared better but have been bogged with their own set of obstacles.

Roxanne Boothe, who heads the 3512 Bayview Ave. coop, has been stuck at the Nu Hotel in Downtown Brooklyn since Sandy struck.

Her first floor dining room, kitchen, bathroom and office space were destroyed in the storm.

"We lost everything, except for some plates because they were higher up," said Boothe. "But I really hope to be back in no later than March 20."

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