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## State announces tax break for winter-impacted residents

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The state Franchise Tax Board (FTB) on Tuesday announced special tax relief for California taxpayers, including those residing in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, impacted by recent winter storms.

It came a day after the Federal Emergency Management Agency issued a federal disaster declaration for the counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, Siskiyou, Los Angeles, Calaveras and Imperial. They can now apply for reimbursement by the federal government to offset costs for damage caused by flooding, debris and mud flows.

San Bernardino County suffered about \$30 million in damage from winter storms that hammered the region from Jan. 17 through Feb. 6. The Big Bear Valley and High Desert cities of Hesperia, Victorville and Apple Valley received the brunt of the damage, said Denise Benson, division manager for the county Office of Emergency Services.

Now, property owners can write off flood damage on their 2009 or 2010 tax returns.

"California families who suffered property damage can find quick relief through their tax returns, state Controller and FTB Chairman John Chiang said in a statement.

Claiming losses on 2009 tax returns will allow the FTB to issue refunds quickly. Taxpayers who have already filed their returns for 2009 can file an amended return.

Those claiming losses on their returns should write "California Winter Storms 2010" in red ink at the top of their returns to alert the FTB to expedite the refund. If e-filing, taxpayers should follow the software instructions to enter the disaster information.

Forms are available on the FTB Web site: [ftb.ca.gov](http://ftb.ca.gov)

Taxpayer needing copies of lost or damaged state returns should complete the Form FTB 3516, "Request for Copy of Tax Return," which is available online.

Anyone who has questions about their accounts can call the FTB at 800-852-5711 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, go to [taxes.ca.gov](http://taxes.ca.gov)