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'08 storm victims may get lift

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When destructive bad weather strikes, tax breaks may prove to be silver linings in the dark clouds.

For example, if you lived in Eaton or Ingham counties and were a victim of one of several severe storms or tornadoes to roll through the area between May 20 and July 31, 2008, you could qualify for tax relief.

The benefits you are eligible differ by county. Areas for help include:

· **Mortgage debt:** If your home was located in an affected area, and you suffered from storm damage, displacement, or loss, your mortgage debt cancellation will not be included in your income as it normally would be.

The mortgage forgiveness must occur before Jan. 1, 2010, and your house must not be secured by property outside the affected areas.

· **Tax credits:** Individuals may calculate their earned income tax or child tax credits using their 2007 income, if it is more beneficial.

· **Casualty loss:** Victims who suffered property losses as a result of casualty or theft in the affected areas can deduct the entire amount of unreimbursed losses if the taxpayer itemizes deductions. A loss must be attributable to the severe storms.

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