

\$2M Sandy sales-tax breaks for 100 LI businesses

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By JAMES T. MADORE james.madore@newsday.com



Photo credit: Barry Sloan | Co-owner Gary Steiner is repairing his Island Park restaurant, which was flooded in October. He said he expects to save \$10,000-\$15,000 in tax on \$150,000 worth of building materials and equipment. (Jan. 7, 2013)

More than 100 local businesses that were damaged by superstorm Sandy have received about \$2 million in sales-tax breaks for the purchase of building materials and equipment to reopen.

The aid from [Nassau](#) and [Suffolk](#) counties, through their industrial development agencies, has served as a lifeline for companies still waiting to have insurance claims processed. Some owners said the tax relief -- 8.625 percent -- allowed them to begin to rebuild.

Last week, the [Brookhaven Town IDA](#) announced a sales-tax exemption for Sandy-ravaged companies of all sizes. The counties' programs are limited to small businesses.

Nicholas Terzulli, business development director for the [Nassau IDA](#), said Monday that 74 companies with 100 or fewer employees have received help so far. They will collectively reap \$1.7 million in tax savings on \$19.5 million worth of supplies.

In [Suffolk](#), IDA executive director Anthony Manetta reported 41 small businesses with 50 or fewer employees have received help. They will collectively save \$218,000 in taxes. Another 62 companies have qualified for the program.

Restaurateur Gary Steiner has used [Nassau's](#) sales-tax exemption to purchase insulation, wallboard, paneling, stoves, freezers and other equipment for his Pancho's Cantina in [Island Park](#). "If you were affected by Sandy, there's absolutely no reason you wouldn't apply for this program," said Steiner, who owns the restaurant with his wife, Helene.

"There's no red tape," Gary Steiner said. "You fill out the two-page application, provide the supporting documents, meet with a representative and get the sales-tax exemption letter if you qualify. I've already saved a lot of money."

The 7,000-square-foot eatery at 4245 Austin Blvd. sustained more than \$500,000 in damages from the Oct. 29 storm. Three feet of water filled the bar, dining room, kitchen and storage areas. About 50 people lost jobs.

Steiner expects to save \$10,000 to \$15,000 in sales tax on \$150,000 worth of building materials and equipment. He hopes to reopen in March.

Unlike the county programs, [Brookhaven's](#) sales-tax exemption isn't limited to small businesses or capped by project size. However, [Brookhaven](#) charges a \$50 application fee, while the county IDAs have waived their respective fees.

Lisa Mulligan, chief executive of the Brookhaven IDA, said, "Anyone can apply who sustained damage in Sandy." Three applications had been received as of Friday. She also said the [Suffolk IDA](#) has agreed to refer applicants from Brookhaven to her.

Brookhaven IDA board chairman Frederick C. Braun III noted that "historically, IDA benefits have been conveyed to larger companies in exchange for capital investments and promised growth. This

program will make some of those benefits available to the small and midsized businesses . . . who desperately need assistance in rebuilding."

The programs require companies to continue to operate in the county or town providing the aid.

Sales-tax relief

Three local industrial development agencies are offering sales tax breaks:

Nassau County IDA, 516-571-1745

Suffolk County IDA, 631-853-4802

Brookhaven Town IDA, 631-451-6563