



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

February 10, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Through: Acting Regional Administrator Ahsha Tribble
FEMA Region IX
Oakland, California 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. sections 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR) section 206.36, I request you declare a Major Disaster for the State of California as a result of an Atmospheric River storm system that began on January 3, 2017, and continued through January 12, 2017.

According to the National Weather Service, during the period of January 3 through January 12, 2017, there was an Atmospheric River system containing several associated storms that swept through California. Much of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and surrounding areas received in excess of 12 inches of rain, with some areas receiving as much as 20 inches. The North and Central Coasts of California received similar amounts of precipitation during this period of time. The Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys received four to five inches of rain. As a result of the heavy rainfall and rapid succession of storms, there was not ample time for rivers, creeks, and streams to recover to lower levels before being hit by another

round of heavy precipitation. The impacts associated with this series of storms were substantial and widespread, devastating much of California.

This series of powerful winter storms brought relentless heavy precipitation and high winds that caused flash flooding, debris and mud flows, erosion, power outages, and damage to critical infrastructure. Northern California counties bore the brunt of the storm system, with rainfall totals in the northern counties totaling 79.74 inches in just a 24-hour period¹. Placer and Plumas counties received the most precipitation during that period with 8.52 and 6.48 inches, respectively. Levee overtopping, breaching, and river flooding occurred statewide, including the Carmel River, Cosumnes River, East Fork Carson River, Eel River, Merced River, Mokelumne River, Middle Fork Feather River, Russian River, Navarro River, Napa River, Sacramento River, Truckee River, Santa Margarita River, and San Diego River. Additionally, many small creeks flooded, impacting communities throughout California. These conditions forced individuals to evacuate their homes and seek services at various shelters, including those established by the American Red Cross.

This storm system was so severe, the California Department of Water Resources was forced to open all of the gates on the Sacramento weir for the first time in more than a decade to relieve the massive buildup of water from this storm system. In addition, transportation throughout the state was difficult during the course of the storm system, causing airport delays and major road closures in numerous locations. State Routes 1, 4, 12, 20, 37, 59, 84, 121, 128, 155, 162, 175, 184, 211, 254, 269 were closed due to severe flooding. Additionally, mudflows, rock slides, and slip-outs closed U.S. Highway 395 and State Routes 1, 9, 16, 35, 41, 49, 70, 113, 128, 152, and 178. Massive snowfall caused the closure of State Routes 3, 20, 88, and 89, Interstate 80, and U.S. Highway 395 in two locations, and an avalanche forced the closure of State Route 158. Heavy winds and severe rainfall caused widespread power outages throughout the affected jurisdictions, leaving an estimated one million households and businesses without power. A total of eight storm-related fatalities occurred in seven counties between January 5 and January 9, 2017.

¹ <http://www.cnrfc.noaa.gov/>

In response to the storm system, numerous counties and cities activated their respective Emergency Operations Centers. Additionally, the State activated the Department of Water Resources Flood Operations Center, the Office of Emergency Services's Coastal, Inland and Southern Regional Operations Centers, and the State Operations Center. During the activation, the State Operations Center mission-tasked various state agencies to provide resources and assistance to the affected areas. These agencies included the California Conservation Corps, California Department of Conservation, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California National Guard, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Transportation, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and California Department of Water Resources.

In response to this storm system, I took appropriate action under State law and directed the execution of the State Emergency Plan in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act. On January 23, 2017, I proclaimed a State of Emergency to exist within 49 counties and ordered the California Department of Transportation to seek assistance through the Federal Highways Administration's Emergency Relief Program, as damages to eligible highways totaled hundreds of millions of dollars as a result of this system. I subsequently issued an Executive Order to include three more counties, and to authorize State funding through the California Disaster Assistance Act.

After conducting initial damage surveys, on January 20, 2017, my Office of Emergency Services requested a joint Federal, State, and local preliminary damage survey of the impacted areas. Beginning January 26, 2017, Cal OES dispatched twelve joint Federal, State, and local assessment teams to determine the extent of the damages in the affected counties. Preliminary assessments indicate the most severe impacts were to public infrastructure, including roads and bridges, flood and water control structures, and other public facilities.

This storm system caused widespread damages throughout California, which included the following:

- Placer County Water Agency's American River potable water intake facility suffered damage to four intake plates and siphoning screens, causing the headwall to be undermined and scouring to occur. This facility provides up to 189 cubic feet per second of water from the American River to western Placer County for domestic and irrigation use, ultimately serving a population of 270,000 people.
- Browns Valley Irrigation District's Yuba River Diversion Channel reached capacity, requiring emergency excavation and dredging.
- Storm debris filled Lake Francis in Dobbins, California².
- Lake Francis Road, the only access road to Yuba County Water Agency's powerhouse, suffered three washouts within a half mile stretch.
- A water supply and distribution line system in Sonoma County were damaged during a washout. The water system has 140 water connections to service 500 residences in the town of Jenner.
- 100 residents of the remote Juniper community became stranded due to damage to the only access road serving that community.
- A 48-inch corrugated metal pipe washed out and eroded the roadway resulting in the collapse of one lane of Blagen Road in Arnold. The resulting erosion exposed main sewer pipes and a high pressure water main pipe.
- Failure of a 90-inch diameter culvert creating a sinkhole 80 feet long by 80 feet wide and approximately 70 feet deep on Freeman Lane in Grass Valley, CA.
- The residents of Alta were isolated when a 110-foot long section of the only access road collapsed, causing serious risk to public health and safety.

California has suffered multiple disasters in the past year. These disasters, in addition to a fifth year of unprecedented drought, severely impacted California's resources, parched landscapes, and created millions of dead trees that increased California's vulnerability to large-scale wildfires. In 2016, California received thirteen Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG) to battle fires in the state. I also proclaimed states of emergency and authorized California Disaster Assistance Act funding for two of those FMAGs, and three storm events throughout the state in the past 12 months. The past five years of extreme

² The last major event to require debris removal on this lake was in 2006, which cost \$905,000. Since the current storm system was much more severe, the costs associated with the debris removal are anticipated to be much more significant.

drought and significant tree mortality have also impacted the State's resources. The State has contributed more than three billion dollars in funds and capital investments responding to the impacts of the drought to advance toward meeting critical near-term needs and long-term drought resiliency and water supply needs.

Generally, drought-ridden land is unable to absorb massive amounts of rainfall in such a short period of time. In addition, areas recovering from wildfires, referred to as burn scars, are particularly susceptible to flooding and debris and mud flow. The ground beneath a burn scar is unable to absorb large quantities of rainfall in a short period of time. Rainwater flows down these burn scars, and carries with it debris remaining from the wildfire.

As the storm system struck California, the exceptionally dry ground and burn scars could not absorb the relentless precipitation. The massive rainfall in such a short period of time caused extensive flooding throughout the State. As one period of rain subsided, rivers and streams did not have a chance to recede below flood stages before the next wave of precipitation hit.

While California and Federal officials attempted to assess the widespread damages, many of the areas were inaccessible due to damage or destroyed roads, highways, and bridges. Shortly after this initial Atmospheric River system swept across California, another Atmospheric River system struck the state, bringing another series of devastating storms. California continues to assess these damages as well.

Preliminary reports of physical damages to homes and/or businesses have not resulted in sufficient damage to warrant a request for Federal assistance through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).


I have determined this storm system is of such severity and magnitude that continued effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments and supplemental federal assistance is necessary. Based upon the joint preliminary damage assessments, I am specifically requesting Public Assistance, and any other Stafford Act disaster assistance programs as appropriate for the counties of Alameda,

Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Humboldt, Inyo, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Trinity, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba; and Hazard Mitigation statewide. California notes its Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and expires September 30, 2018.

Estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed under the Safford Act are tabulated in the Enclosures, as well as estimated requirements for assistance from certain federal agencies under statutory authorities. Total Public Assistance expenditures are expected to exceed \$162.3 million.

I certify for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Stafford Act. I have designated the Director of the Office of Emergency Services, Mark Ghilarducci, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. Mr. Ghilarducci will work with FEMA on my behalf.

Sincerely,


EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

A: Individual Assistance

B: Public Assistance

C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

D: Historic and Current Snowfall Data

Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations in Previous 12 Months

National Weather Service Report