



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 13, 2019

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

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.  
Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region IX  
Oakland, California 94607-4052

**RE: REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS**

Dear President Trump:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request Major Disaster Declarations for the State of California as a result of the two atmospheric river storm systems that struck California in February 2019.

According to the National Weather Service, two extraordinarily severe atmospheric river storm systems struck California during February 13-15, 2019 and February 24-March 1, 2019. These storm systems brought unprecedented precipitation, breaking at least 51 daily precipitation records throughout the state. As a result of the heavy rainfall and rapid succession of storms, there was little time for swollen rivers, creeks, and streams to recover before being hit by another round of heavy precipitation. The storms caused widespread flash flooding, erosion, mud and debris flows, power outages, and damage to roadways and other critical infrastructure. In addition to the precipitation, heavy winds uprooted trees, impacting roads and power lines.

In response, counties throughout the state declared local emergencies and activated their respective Emergency Operations Centers. Additionally, the state activated the California Department of Water Resources Flood Operations Center, my Office of Emergency Services' (Cal OES) Coastal, Inland, and Southern Regional Emergency Operations Centers, and the State Operations Center. Many state agencies and other organizations also provided assistance, including the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, California Department of Water Resources, California National

Guard, California Conservation Corps, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Department of General Services, California Department of Public Health, California Department of Social Services, California Department of Transportation, and American Red Cross.

I also directed the execution of the State Emergency Plan in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act, and proclaimed states of emergency within the counties of Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, Shasta, Solano, Sonoma, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, Ventura, and Yolo. Because damage to eligible roadways resulting from these storms exceeded \$100 million, I further ordered the California Department of Transportation to seek assistance through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program, and authorized state assistance through the California Disaster Assistance Act.

After conducting initial damage surveys, Cal OES requested a joint federal, state, and local Preliminary Damage Assessment of the impacted areas on February 28, 2019. Beginning on March 2, 2019, Cal OES dispatched 34 teams to conduct the joint Preliminary Damage Assessment to determine the extent of damage to public infrastructure. The assessment revealed extensive and widespread damage. Most notably, the Russian River reached flood stage, resulting in mass flooding throughout the Russian River corridor and local creeks and rivers in Sonoma County. There was significant flooding in the Town of Guerneville, resulting in the evacuation of thousands of residents and damage to hundreds of homes. The flooding inundated the Cloverdale Municipal Airport adjacent to the river, a water treatment facility in the City of Cloverdale, and part of the Sonoma Valley Hospital. Sonoma County Water Agency and Sonoma County Parks Department facilities and access roads were also damaged by the floodwaters. Parts of the City of Healdsburg were flooded as well when the Russian River breached. The floodwater and debris damaged the pumps and filtration panels of a water reclamation facility in the City of Healdsburg, and submerged most of the facility's electrical systems.

Significant damage was also widespread throughout the state. Examples of damage from the storm system beginning February 13, 2019 include:

- In Calaveras County, severe erosion to four county roads and hillside slip-outs that deposited large amounts of silt and debris onto county roads.
- In Los Angeles County, flooding and erosion to 45 county roads and slopes.
- In Modoc County, severe erosion to 12 county roads. Many of these roads still remain inaccessible.
- In San Bernardino County, flooding and debris flow countywide. The flooding and debris flow resulted in severe erosion to six county roads. During the peak of the storm, water flows inundated two water control facilities owned and maintained by the Yucaipa Valley Water District. Flowing debris caused damage to a sewer system, which poses a threat to public health and safety. The enormous amount of rainfall also caused significant damage to flood control embankments and levees in the county.

- In Shasta County, 18 inches of snow fell in a matter of hours. This uprooted thousands of live oak trees and snapped branches, which resulted in widespread debris falling into public rights of way, onto power lines, irrigation systems, and recreational areas and parks.

Examples of damage from the storm system beginning February 24, 2019 include:

- In Amador County, severe erosion to seven county roads and inundated numerous roadway drainage systems.
- In Humboldt County, flooding countywide, inundating numerous roadway drainage systems, and causing multiple slip outs and mud and debris flows.
- In Lake County, significant damage to roadways and water mains, and knocked down trees across the county.
- In Tehama County, flooding and mud and debris flows that damaged 17 county roads. Blocked roads, in turn, created a public safety hazard when emergency safety vehicles were unable to use the roads. The City of Red Bluff, which had several streets flooded, had to set up and monitor portable generators to run the city sewer lift rotations after it lost power due to the enormous amount of rainfall.

Furthermore, many jurisdictions were impacted by both storm systems. Examples include:

- In Colusa County, severe erosion to 16 county roads. The runoff also deposited a large amount of vegetation, debris, and silt onto the roadways.
- In Napa County, major slip outs and damage to an area of land particularly vulnerable as a result of the 2017 fires.
- In Marin County, massive mud and debris flow that deposited approximately 4,000 cubic yards of vegetation and debris onto Sausalito Boulevard and Crescent Avenue, and washed out a 200-foot section of a lateral sewer pipe that serviced nearby residents. Heavy rainfall also caused a breach of the Novato Creek bank levee that washed out a 100-foot portion of Sonoma Marin Area Regional Transit tracks, base, and ballast.

In addition to damage to public infrastructure, the storms significantly impacted individuals and businesses. Localized flooding in several communities damaged hundreds of homes and businesses. Two shelters opened for displaced individuals with assistance from the American Red Cross, private non-profit organizations, and faith-based services. A Local Assistance Center operated for one week and was supported by nonprofit, local, and state agencies. On March 13, 2019, Cal OES made a formal request to the U.S. Small Business Administration for Sonoma County and received the SBA Disaster Declaration on March 21, 2019.

California has suffered multiple major disasters in the past several years. In November 2018, California experienced the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in the state's history, tragically claiming more than 80 lives and destroying more than 18,000 structures. The Camp Fire devastated the Town of Paradise and neighboring portions of Butte County, while two large wildfires destroyed portions of Los Angeles and Ventura

California. Collectively, these fires resulted in a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4407-DR-CA). Four months before that, in July 2018, California experienced the Carr Fire and Mendocino Complex Fire, the largest fire in California history, for which you issued a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4382-DR-CA).

In December 2017, the Thomas Fire, which at the time was the largest fire in California history, destroyed portions of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Shortly after the fire, deadly mud and debris flows occurred in Montecito, tragically claiming more than 20 lives. The Thomas Fire and subsequent mud and debris flows caused unprecedented damage and destruction and resulted in a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4353-DR-CA).

Less than two months before that, in October 2017, you issued a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4344-DR-CA) for wildfires in Northern California, which at the time were the deadliest and most destructive in California history. These fires destroyed thousands of structures and claimed 43 lives.

And just two years ago, in January and February 2017, California experienced severe winter storms, which resulted in widespread flooding and warranted three separate Major Disaster Declarations (FEMA-4301-DR-CA, FEMA-4305-DR-CA, and FEMA-4308-DR-CA).

In addition to the major disasters referenced above, California experienced numerous other disasters over the past year, resulting in the expenditure of millions of dollars in California Disaster Assistance Act funding. This includes numerous 2018 fires as well as atmospheric river storm systems in January and early February 2019, which are not encompassed in this request.

I have determined these atmospheric river storm systems are of such severity and magnitude that continued effective response is beyond the capability of the State and affected local governments, and supplemental federal assistance is necessary. Based upon the joint preliminary damage assessments, I am requesting all available disaster assistance under the Stafford Act for the counties of Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sonoma, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, and Yolo, as well as Stafford Act Hazard Mitigation statewide.

Estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed are tabulated in the Enclosures. Total assessed damages are expected to exceed \$100 million for the February 13 – 15, 2019 atmospheric river storm system and \$57 million for the February 24 – March 1, 2019 system, which are both in excess of California's indicator for assistance.

I certify for these Major Disasters that 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 my Office of Emergency Services, Mark Ghilarducci, as the State

Coordinating Officer for these requests. Mr. Ghilarducci will work with FEMA on my behalf.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California

Enclosures

- A: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance for Event Beginning 02/13/19
  - B: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance for Event Beginning 02/24/19
  - C: Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs for Event Beginning 02/13/19
  - D: Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs for Event Beginning 02/24/19
  - E: Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations in Previous 18 Months
- OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA 010-0-13 – Atmospheric River Event beginning February 13, 2019
- OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA 010-0-13 – Atmospheric River Event beginning February 24, 2019