



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 22, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President,

I write to request a Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) pursuant to the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, due to the severe winter storms that commenced January 31, 2024, and continued through February 9, 2024 (Early February 2024 Winter Storms event), significantly impacting communities across California. Specifically, I am requesting all categories of Public Assistance for Butte, Glenn, Los Angeles, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Sutter, and Ventura counties. I am also requesting Hazard Mitigation assistance statewide.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

This Early February 2024 Winter Storms event significantly impacted the State, endangering lives and property while creating a disaster that is beyond the capabilities of the State and local governments. With critical infrastructure damaged or destroyed and major flooding within vulnerable population

centers, the impacts have been profound and have tragically caused 11 known fatalities.

Incident Overview

California was impacted by a series of atmospheric rivers during the Early February 2024 Winter Storms which brought multiple rounds of heavy precipitation, strong winds, mountain snow, and river and urban flooding across the State. The first impacts were felt on January 31, 2024, and the precipitation did not completely subside until February 9, 2024, as reported by the National Weather Service (NWS).

Parts of Southern California received six to 18 inches of snow above 6,000 feet and Northern California received 24 to 48 inches across the Sierra Nevada mountains. NWS has reported that the average snowpack in the Sierras increased by 10 to 20 percent as a result of these storms.

NWS also confirmed two tornadoes touched down in San Luis Obispo County on February 7, 2024, both registering as EF-1 with estimated winds up to 95 miles per hour (mph). These tornadoes topped and uprooted trees, including large trees with diameters greater than 1.5 feet, some of which fell onto buildings, vehicles, and powerlines causing more damage. The high winds caused damage to multiple structures.

Due to soil saturation coupled with strong winds, fallen debris caused significant power outages throughout the State. It is estimated that approximately 1.4 million customers lost power during this event. These power outages also impacted the safety of drinking water when, at the height of water use restrictions on February 9, 2024, 375 customers were given a boiled water notice and 1,838 were placed on precautionary boiled water notices.

Schools across the State were impacted, resulting in widespread school closures. At the peak of school closures on February 6, 2024, 273 schools were closed across 84 school districts, impacting 111,842 students. To date, 45 schools have reported damage of varying severity in eight counties across California.

Emergency Response

On January 31, 2024, the State activated its State Operations Center (SOC) in preparation for the incoming storms along with the State's Flood Operations Center (FOC). The SOC remained activated at level two until February 8, 2024, when it resumed normal operations. At the peak of the event, 23 out of 58 counties across the State activated their Emergency Operations Centers (EOC),

along with numerous cities, local agencies, non-profit organizations, and private entities.

On February 4, 2024, pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act, I issued a proclamation declaring a State of Emergency in multiple counties across the state, including Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. The proclamation includes a variety of provisions in response to the Early February 2024 Winter Storm event, including activation of the State Emergency Plan. On March 22, 2024, I extended the State of Emergency for the Early February 2024 Winter Storms to additional jurisdictions including Butte, Glenn, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Sutter counties and extended the activation of the State Emergency Plan to these proclaimed counties.

Other California State agencies and departments responding to the Early February 2024 Winter Storms event included the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), the Conservation Corps, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of General Services, the Department of Insurance, the Department of Justice, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Water Resources, the Emergency Medical Services Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Franchise Tax Board, the Highway Patrol, and the California National Guard.

The resources allocated for prepositioning throughout this event and across the State included 35 Cal OES Engines, 120 local government engines, 22 local government dozers, 11 local government hand crews, 27 local government dispatchers, 151 IMT members, and 32 Swiftwater/Urban Search and Rescue Teams from both local governments and Cal OES. Throughout the event, there were 31 total rescues conducted by local fire agencies within several counties and a total of 59 rescues due to flooding across the State.

The American Red Cross and California Department of Social Services supported shelter efforts across the State. On February 5, the peak of evacuation orders and warnings, there were more than 3,419 people under evacuation orders and 1,908 people under evacuation. On February 8, the peak shelter numbers were recorded at 2 Congregate Shelters, with 123 people sheltered, and one Non-Congregate Shelter, with five people sheltered.

IMPACTS TO INFRASTRUCTURE

The total FEMA concurred costs for this event are currently \$87,722,176.22 or \$2.22 per capita, exceeding the Statewide Public Assistance indicator of \$1.84 per capita and Statewide threshold of \$72,750,330. As elaborated below, the Early February 2024 Winter Storms devastated communities across California.

Southern Region

San Luis Obispo County: The storms toppled trees and power lines, destroyed awnings, and damaged concrete across the County. Electrical power was shut off to thousands and debris littered much of Grover Beach. At one point, wind speeds topped 95 mph and a tornado caused intermittent damage along its path before dissipating about five miles east along Los Osos Valley Road. Additionally, a shelter-in-place order was issued for an Arroyo Grande neighborhood due to downed power lines and power outages.

In the City of San Luis Obispo, the storm caused severe damage to eight steel firehouse rollup bay doors and caused the loss of multiple communication antennae on top of the building. Two individuals were also trapped in a building as a result of a collapsed wall on Grand Avenue. The storm also damaged an iron security gate at the Grover Beach Police Department, and the gutters and roof of the building were damaged due to fallen trees and overcapacity of influx of storm water.

In the City of Morro Bay, the Cayucos Pier was damaged by unusually high waves. This pier has a rich history dating back more than 150 years and the integrity of the pier has been jeopardized due to major structural damage caused by these storms.

San Luis Obispo County submitted an individual damage estimate (IDE) of \$300,000, and FEMA subsequently concurred with \$1,927,979.22, which equates to \$6.83 per capita.

Santa Barbara County: The County experienced severe cold temperatures, snow in higher elevations, strong winds, flooding, and isolated thunderstorms. County rainfall gauges measured nine inches of rain at San Marcos Pass and four inches of rain in the City of Santa Barbara within a 24-hour period, prompting the County to issue a flash flood warning.

Gusty winds exceeded 70 mph, which toppled trees, damaged homes in Goleta, and tore off part of a windmill in Solvang, a town in California's Santa Ynez Valley known for its Danish heritage and architecture.

High winds and large amounts of rain overwhelmed concrete channels that divert excess water from residential areas so much so that 300 linear feet (LF) of the Cieneguitas Concrete V Channels were completely destroyed.

Sediment from debris flows filled three local debris basins to near capacity which threatened an airport runway, local roads, and paths of travel with flooding if it was not dredged and cleaned out immediately.

At the Chumash Indian Reservation, the Zanja de Cota Creek, a year-round flowing stream that is a critical water way for the Chumash Indians, eroded and collapsed a section of channel bank resulting in downed trees and multiple piles of vegetative debris along the creek. Additionally, the reservation's fire station office building was inundated with rain, which caused water damage to carpeted floor, as well as an electrical junction box on the outside of the office building.

Mohawk Road, which runs along the shore of a lake and is a 14-foot-wide asphalt road, was overrun by floodwaters, which eroded the embankment slope between the road and lake. Erosion also undermined the road, and loss of the embankment exposed a 10-inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC) utility pipe for 25 feet. Additionally, a 4-foot by 4-foot concrete surface drain with a 5-foot corrugated metal pipe (CMP) extension was displaced by erosion. The site will require reconstruction of the slope and partial reconstruction of the roadbed. Also worth noting, the road is located next to a protected drinking water pipeline, which complicates the repair process.

Wind-blown sand covered a large section of West Main Street in Guadalupe, which is the entry road to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve. The 20-foot-wide road was covered with an average of five inches of sand for 4,200 feet of roadway. Additionally, the 23,976 square foot parking area is covered with five inches of sand. This road is used by residents to access fishing grounds, which is significant to the local economy and diet.

Dominion Road in rural Garey experienced a sinkhole at grade surface, that indicates that a 195 LF x 66-inch CMP has been compromised, and it's expected that repair of the CMP and road would require major excavation as well as shoring up a 50-foot trench. Additionally, Foothill Road Bridge in Cuyama experienced erosion to a dike on the east. The loss of fill material is estimated at 210 cubic yards (CY) and there was erosion around 110 support columns, which exposed up to 4-feet of pile casings and the pile cap.

FEMA has concurred with \$6,423,839 in costs for Santa Barbara County, which equates to \$14.33 per capita.

Ventura County: The County experienced extensive flooding, resulting in damage to roadways, bridges, levees, wastewater treatment facilities, water distribution systems, and park facilities. The heavy rain also resulted in the evacuation of several hundred residential structures and 39 incidents of water intrusion into homes and businesses across the County. The flood damage included inundation of the Ventura Wastewater Facility, which caused water to back flow into the system. The torrential rain and heavy flows also overwhelmed the two 24-inch culverts on Foothill Road in the City of Ventura. This overflow of excessive rainwater overtopped the asphalt berm and scoured the dirt embankment, which then collapsed and washed away a section of the berm and embankment.

The significant rain and elevated river flows across the Ventura River also overwhelmed a sediment removal basin and washed out a timber cutoff wall and fish bypass basin, which allows the Steel Head Salmon to circumvent the Robles Passage Facility and continue to the river. Additionally, mudslides blocked State Route 33 in Los Padres National Forest near Rose Valley and Pine Mountain roads, and many debris basins were overwhelmed with sediment.

The Ventura River overtopped the riverbank and altered its course. The new path created by the river washed out the road and embankment along Foster Park Service Road and blew out a 36-inch above-ground water distribution system that serves the neighborhoods along Foster Park.

Ventura County submitted an IDE of \$36,926,000, of which FEMA has concurred with \$18,797,814, which equates to \$22.28 per capita.

Los Angeles County: Downtown Los Angeles received more than seven inches of rain between Sunday, February 4, and Monday, February 5, 2024, which is the third-highest two-day rainfall total on record. Mud and debris flows inundated roads and forced evacuations. There were widespread power outages, road closures due to flooding, and hundreds of mudslides, which forced evacuations in Hollywood Hills, Studio City, and other parts of Los Angeles County.

The Department of Public Works responded to hundreds of calls for service, including 553 fallen trees and branches, 1,180 reports of potholes, and a combined total of 1,511 catch basins and stormwater conveyance systems that needed to be cleared. Multiple campuses across the Los Angeles Unified School District, the largest public school system in California and the second largest public school district in the United States serving over 560,000 students, were closed and students were bussed to other nearby schools.

The Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant (HWRP) in the City of Los Angeles suffered significant damage when a sewer line experienced an excess of pressure due to the extreme amount of water inundating the line, reaching over 30 percent of normal operating capacity. This extreme pressure forced sewage to come up out of manhole covers and flood portions of the facility. HWRP averages 260 million gallons per day (MGD) but at the peak of the Early February 2024 Winter Storms surged above 860 MGD. The flooding caused 108 actuators to be submerged and damaged, causing the filtration system to shut down. Additionally, flooding at the Waste Thickening Building caused major damage to the electrical components in the basement leaving the building shut down and without power. This forced HWRP to borrow power at \$80,000 per day in order to continue operations. The breach left an excessive amount of debris scattered throughout the facility, as seen in Figure 1 below. An estimated 15,000 pounds of debris per day was sent to a landfill in Simi Valley. The HWRP serves over four million people in the City of Los Angeles and surrounding cities. It is considered one of the largest plants of its kind in the world and the largest sewage treatment plant by volume west of the Mississippi River. The HWRP sits adjacent to the Santa Monica Bay and the Dockweiler State Beach, making it a high risk for contaminating beach and waterways when the facility is damaged.

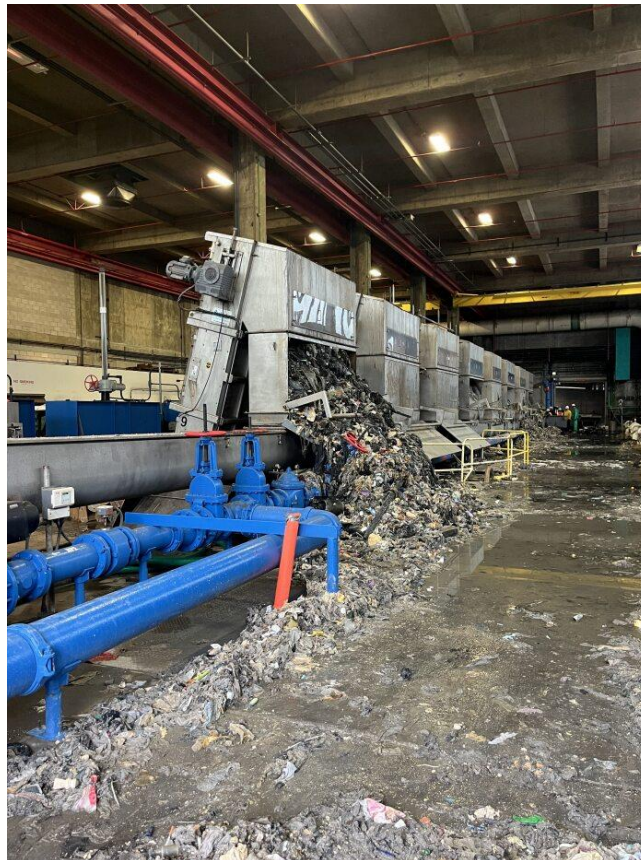


Figure 1: Damaged Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant Pump

Los Angeles County submitted an IDE of \$60,538,132.90, of which FEMA has concurred with \$52,996,080, which equates to \$5.29 per capita.

Coastal Region

Santa Cruz County: High winds and heavy rain in Santa Cruz County caused downed trees, high flowing rivers, landslides, and mudslides. The wind surpassed 70 mph on numerous peaks in the region, including Mount Umunhum, which recorded wind speeds as high as 81 mph. These strong winds left more than 70,000 customers without electricity and caused a eucalyptus tree to fall on and sever a 10-inch steel aerial sewer main that spans Arana Gulch.

Several narrow two-lane residential roads that wind through steep hillsides have experienced slip-outs and may be in danger of further damage from upcoming rainstorms, possibly restricting emergency services and posing a danger to residents.

A municipal Wharf in the City of Santa Cruz sustained damage due to high tide and heavy surf. Four of the pilings were damaged and a portion of the pier's deck has collapsed. The wharf is an important revenue source and is vital to the local economy.

Santa Cruz County submitted an IDE of \$7,439,500, of which FEMA has concurred with \$1,383,436, which equates to \$5.11 per capita.

Monterey County: The County experienced excessive rainfall, high winds up to 60 mph, and downed trees and power lines, resulting in widespread power outages throughout the County, including households in more rural areas. Heavy rain caused scouring in burn scars and areas with steep slopes, which overwhelmed catch basins and stormwater conveyance systems with silt and debris. The clearing of tens of thousands of cubic yards of silt and debris material had to be trucked long distances for disposal.

The Monterey County Sheriff's Office issued a Shelter-In-Place and full road closure on February 4, 2024, for areas of Arroyo Seco Road and the tributary roads west of Carmel Valley Road due to the mass movement of falling rock with the potential for slope failure. Additionally, Robinson Canyon Road experienced a failed shoulder and slope slip out.

Monterey County submitted an IDE of \$4,339,176, of which FEMA has concurred with \$3,547,000, which equates to \$8.08 per capita.

Inland Region

Butte County: The storms brought strong winds, torrential rain, and flooding to Butte County and caused over 40,000 power outages on February 4, 2024. The significant wind and rain caused road closures and property damage, including 100 fallen trees, some of which fell on County roads and damaged guardrails. Most of this damage occurred within the burn scars of the Bear Fire and the Camp Fire, which covers roughly 40 percent of the County. Cleanup efforts were complicated by downed power and communication lines, requiring coordination with Pacific Gas and Electric and AT&T.

Flooding caused temporary closures of local and agricultural roads. Additionally, a 150-foot culvert that runs under Oroville Quincy Highway was damaged, causing water to spill over the road and fill the ditch with sediment.

Butte County submitted an IDE of \$3,219,287, of which FEMA has concurred with \$1,561,428, which equates to \$7.38 per capita.

Glenn County: The County experienced high winds and heavy rainfall that led to roadway impacts and power outages, leaving nearly 400 customers without power. Several County roads also closed due to flooding, which will require debris removal and repairs.

Additionally, the County's Airport runway was damaged by heavy rain. Specifically, at the south end of the runway, the water flows washed out the aggregate base of the runway.

Glenn County submitted an IDE of \$470,000, and FEMA subsequently concurred with \$617,000, which equates to \$21.34 per capita.

Sutter County: The County experienced widespread damage caused by these storms. The extreme winds caused 10,500 homes and businesses to be without power from February 4 through February 5, 2024. Additionally, 12 roads were closed due to flooding, downed trees, downed powerlines, or failed drainage pipes.

The Yuba Fairgrounds were severely damaged by the high winds and rain. Specifically, a restroom was damaged when a 15-foot redwood tree fell onto the building. High winds also caused damage to a livestock barn and compromised two 60-foot wood light poles at a baseball field, causing one pole to snap at the base.

Sutter County submitted an IDE of \$495,672, of which FEMA has concurred with \$467,600, which equates to \$4.69 per capita.

STATE FISCAL IMPACTS

As noted above, FEMA and the State have concurred on \$87,722,176.22 in costs for this event. Since the beginning of 2021, I have requested, and you have supported, 6 Major Disaster Declarations, and California has experienced an additional 16 state-only events for which I have proclaimed a State of Emergency. To date, these disasters have cost nearly \$3 billion.

CERTIFICATION

I certify for this Major Disaster Declaration request 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 the Cal OES, Nancy Ward, as the Governor's Authorized Representative and State Coordinating Officer for this request. Director Ward is empowered to execute on behalf of the State all necessary documents for federal assistance and will work with FEMA in continuing to provide more information or justification on my behalf.

CONCLUSION

As explained above, California experienced significant damage from the heavy precipitation and snow, river and urban flooding, and high winds caused by the Early February 2024 Winter Storms event. For these reasons, I am requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for all categories of Public Assistance for the counties identified above, as well as Hazard Mitigation Statewide.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom

Governor of California

Enclosures:

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

Enclosure B: Public Assistance

Enclosure C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

National Weather Service Statement

Table 1: National Weather Service Tornado Fact Sheet