

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION
COVER LETTER

September 25, 2023

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

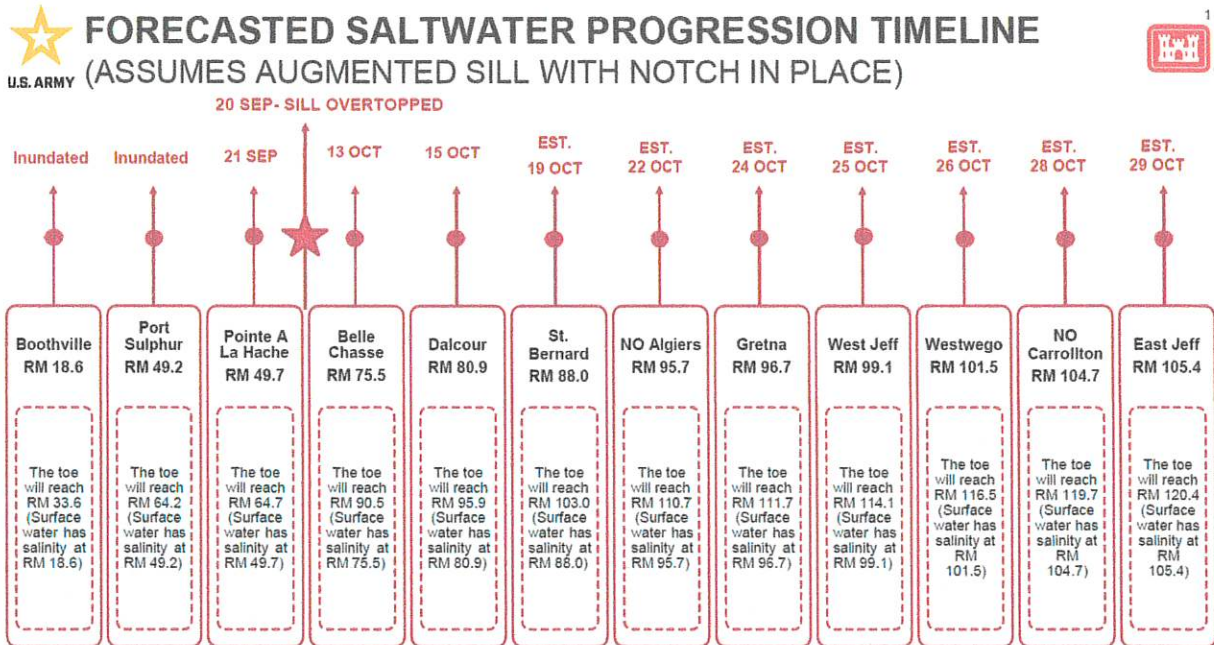
Through: George A. Robinson
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VI
800 North Loop
Denton, TX 76209

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 501(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5191 (Stafford Act), as implemented at 44 C.F.R § 206.35, I request that you declare an emergency for the State of Louisiana, as a result of the recent sea water (saltwater) intrusion crisis. The fresh water flow rate coming down the Mississippi River has been low in Louisiana and across the Mississippi River Valley. As a result of these historic low flow conditions, an intrusion of saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico is making its way upriver which will affect several parishes near the lower Mississippi River. The increased salinity from the saltwater intrusion is forecast to exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) maximum secondary standard of 250 mg/L of chloride, impacting public drinking water, which feeds critical infrastructure, as well as residential homes, and introducing the risk of widespread corrosion of water distribution systems, machinery, and appliances. Plaquemines Parish has already been affected by the intrusion and its water supply is currently being sanitized by water treatment plants. Parishes that receive their water source from the Mississippi River include Plaquemines Parish, St. Bernard Parish, Jefferson Parish, and Orleans Parish.

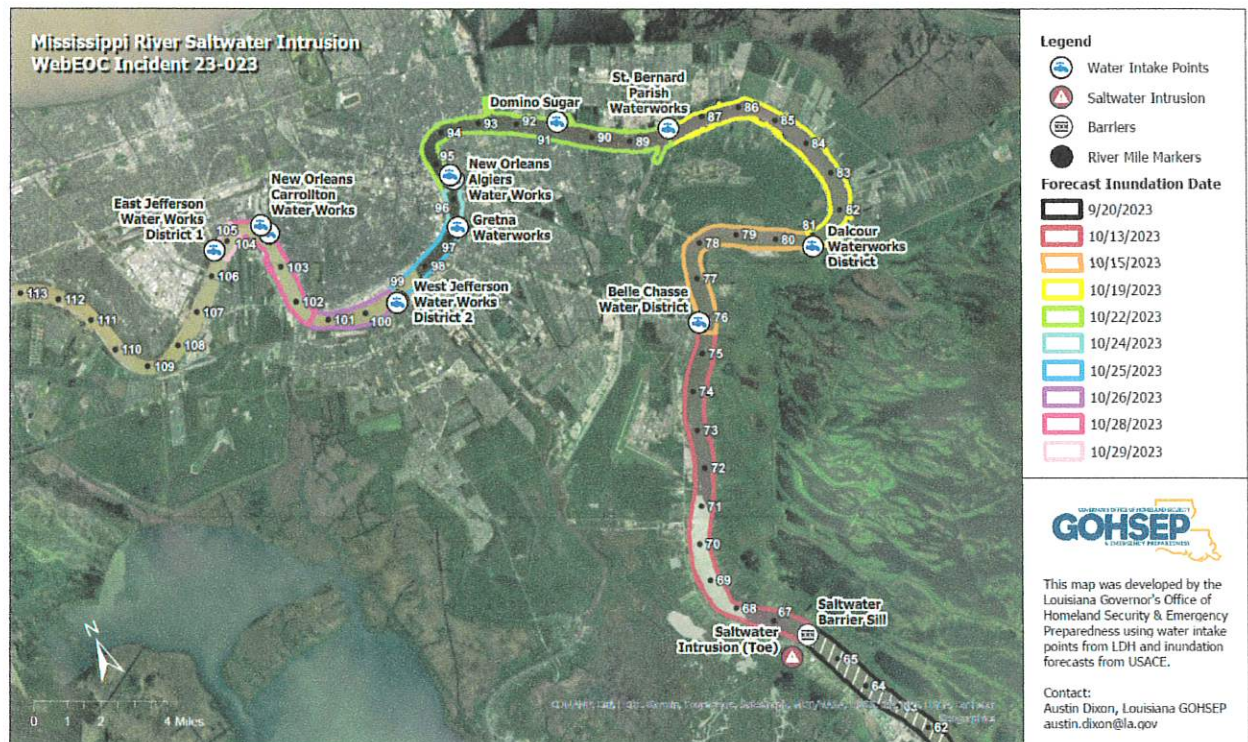
As of September 20, 2023, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted river surveys and have identified that the saltwater wedge has overtopped the underwater sill at river mile marker 63.8 and progressed to approximately river mile 66. It is important to note that the underwater sill is a temporary protective measure constructed under USACE authority to mitigate intrusion. The overtopping of the sill was initially forecasted to occur on September 22, 2023. As a result of the overtopping occurring in advance of the forecasted date, the predicted saltwater progression timeline has been advanced approximately three days. Based on current forecasts, this event is expected to extend until January 2024.



EST = OUT OF THE FORECAST WINDOW AND IS AN ESTIMATE

20SEP2023 1500

Provided by the USACE



Graph of Projected Intrusion Timeline

In Plaquemines Parish, over 23,515 residents have been impacted by the saltwater intrusion. More specifically this includes the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, eleven (11) schools (approximately 5,000 students), one (1) prison (700 inmates), one (1) nursing home (100 residents), and one (1) urgent care clinic. Citrus Farms and Livestock has also been affected by the intrusion. The State has also received reports of appliances including water heaters, washing machines, and ice machines, being damaged. Residents have also reported skin irritations and other health conditions from salt exposure.

As the saltwater wedge makes its way up the Mississippi River other parishes and its citizens will be impacted by this event. St. Bernard Parish has reported impacts to over 43,764 residents. This includes thirteen (13) schools, one (1) junior college (2,166 enrolled), one (1) prison (700 inmates), one (1) nursing home, one (1) hospital, two (2) dialysis centers, and four (4) power plants. Additionally, reported impacts from Orleans Parish include over 376,970 residents, including eighty-five (85) public schools (47,462 students), fifty-six (56) private schools (19,154 students), twenty-seven (27) hospitals, fourteen (14) nursing homes, twenty-eight (28) dialysis centers, and a jail (1,500 inmates). Jefferson Parish has reported impacts to 440,781 residents, eighty-two (82) public schools (46,839 students), fifty-six (56) private schools (18,935 students), six (6) tier 1 hospitals, eight (8) tier 2 hospitals, a regional trauma center, ten (10) nursing homes, and a prison housing 1,200 inmates. With the current projections, it should be noted that almost 20% of the State's population could be impacted by this event.

The Louisiana Department of Health noted the severe health risks associated with saltwater intrusion. Saltwater can make drinking water unsafe, especially for vulnerable people including but not limited to people with kidney disease, high blood pressure, people on a low-sodium diet,

dialysis patients, infants and pregnant women. The health effects of drinking saltwater have been found to be associated with cardiovascular diseases, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Additionally, in light of the impending impact of the saltwater intrusion on municipal water supplies, many of the State's largest medical providers and critical facilities have been impacted. For example, the two largest hospital systems in the region are both taking protective measures, as are the network of dialysis providers and other critical healthcare partners.

If current projections are correct, the loss of municipal water already seen in Plaquemines Parish will continue upriver and will adversely impact critical emergency services in several ways. Contaminated water will damage hospital systems that are dependent on clean water for operations. More specifically, all nine (9) facilities utilize chiller systems to maintain comfortable temperatures. These systems require water to function. More importantly, the facilities are dependent on clean water to operate all sterilization equipment. Damage to these systems will close the facilities for extended periods and replacement of the equipment will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Hospitals are dependent on water to operate and without water they will be unable to provide emergency medical services to the communities they serve.

In response to this situation, I have taken the appropriate action under state law and declared a statewide emergency (141 JBE 2023) on August 11, 2023. Furthermore, I have directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan in support of the statewide emergency declaration in accordance with Section 501 of the Stafford Act. A copy of that declaration is attached, as well as copies of 148 JBE 2023 and 154 JBE 2023. As of the time of this request, four parishes have issued parish emergency declarations.

Based on the latest data provided by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) I anticipate the need for emergency protective measures, including but not limited to water distribution, contracting for bulk water, barging of bulk water, reimbursement to local agencies for protective measures, emergency procurement of water purification systems and supplies, overtime for critical staffing, procurement of technical services, call center services, enhanced public messaging and alerting, logistic support to include potential activation of Louisiana National Guard and contracting for logistical resources such as material handling equipment, trucks, and trailers. Based on the projected impacts and timeframes provided by USACE, each water system is conducting research to identify possible solutions to find alternative raw water sources. While procurement of reverse osmosis purification units and water barges can address smaller systems, the larger systems in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes may require the procurement of larger water vessels and the installation of new pipelines to relocate water intakes miles upriver. With no firm timeline for the duration of this event and no prior event to refer to, it is impossible to estimate the total cost to be incurred by the State and our local partners for this event.

The following information is furnished on the nature of State and local government resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster:

STATE
GOHSEP

- Activated its EOC to Level 3 as of 9/23/23, and is coordinating response measures across the State.

- Provided 243,000 1-liter boxes of water and 72,960 bottles of water for the communities of Buras and Boothville.
- Requested additional mitigation efforts from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to continue to produce potable water within the parishes.
- The Governor has conducted two (2) Unified Command Group meetings with key stakeholders

PARISHES

Plaquemines Parish

- Parish declared a State of Emergency on 6/21/2023.
- Purchased over 200,000 bottles of water and 16,000 pounds of ice for the communities of Buras and Boothville.
- Installed booster pumps at the Port Sulphur Water Treatment Plant to push water to Port Sulphur to Boothville.
- Ongoing monitoring of saltwater and chloride levels at each facility.
- In the process of procuring reverse osmosis systems in Boothville, Port Sulphur, and Belle Chasse.
- Requested USACE to place a reverse osmosis system in Point a la Hache.
- Obtaining quotes for reservoir barges for Port Sulphur, Point a la Hache, Belle Chasse and Dalcour.
- Working on tie-ins to Jefferson and Orleans Parish water systems.

St. Bernard Parish

- Parish declared a State of Emergency 8/15/2023.
- Requested assistance with barging water to supply water treatment facility to produce potable water.
- Requested sufficient reverse osmosis systems to process up to 9 million gallons of water a day for parish.
- Contractors have been engaged to provide production of potable water.

Orleans Parish

- Parish declared a State of Emergency 8/8/2023.
- Contractors have been engaged to provide production of potable water.
- Requested assistance from USACE with barging water to supply water treatment facility to produce potable water.
- Requested sufficient reverse osmosis systems to process up to 9 million gallons of water a day for parish.
- Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) requested the following assistance to prepare for anticipated impacts from saltwater intrusion at the Algiers water system:
 - Four (4) barges with total capacity of 6 million gallons (MG) to serve as a temporary reservoir.
 - Pumps for the barges. Pumps must have capacity to transfer water to and from transfer barges.
 - Technical/engineering assistance in designing a temporary pumping system to transfer raw water to Algiers Intake #2 piping system (location contingent on suitability of receiving infrastructure).

Jefferson Parish

- Parish declared a State of Emergency on 9/19/2023.
- Requested 30 pallets of bottled water from GOHSEP.
- Requested procurement of two reverse osmosis systems to attach to the current water treatment facilities.
- Contractors have been engaged to provide production of potable water.
- Requested procurement of two (2) reverse osmosis systems to attach to the current water treatment facilities.
- Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office is requesting 40 pallets of water to provide for Deputies and staff of the Sheriff's office.

Pursuant to 44 CFR Section 206.35, I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary to save lives and to protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster. I am specifically requesting:

Public Assistance Category B (Emergency Protective Measures)

Public Assistance Category B, emergency protective measures, including:

- Providing in state stock of critical potable water to the citizens of the impacted area.
- Contracting for potable water solutions for the impacted area. Examples include, reverse osmosis, procurement of bottle and boxed water, contracting for potable tanker and barge assets.
- Reimbursement to local agencies for protective measures.
- Emergency procurement of water purification systems and supplies.
- Overtime for critical staffing.
- Procurement of technical services.
- Call center services.
- Enhanced public messaging and alerting.
- Logistic support to include potential activation of Louisiana National Guard and contracting for logistical resources such as material handling equipment, trucks, and trailers.

I certify that for this emergency, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act.

Direct Federal Assistance (DFA)

I request direct Federal assistance for work and services to save lives and protect property, to include:

- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – reverse osmosis systems, potable barge water technical assistance, mapping, GIS support, and any other emergency protective measures necessary.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – information sharing and consultation.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) – information sharing and consultation.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – information sharing and consultation.
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – information sharing and consultation.

This assistance is requested for the following parishes:

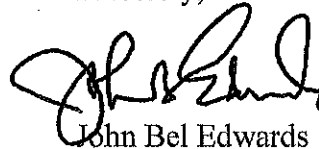
- Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard.

In accordance with 44 CFR Section 206.208, the State of Louisiana agrees that it will, with respect to direct Federal assistance:

1. Provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary to accomplish the approved work;
2. Hold and save the United States free from damages due to the requested work, and shall indemnify the Federal Government against any claims arising from such work;
3. Provide reimbursement to FEMA for the non-Federal share of the cost of such work in accordance with the provisions of the FEMA-State Agreement; and
4. Assist the performing Federal agency in all support and local jurisdictional matters.

I have designated Casey Tingle as the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) and Christina Dayries as the Alternate GAR. I have designated Carla Richard as the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) for this request. Director Tingle and will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and will provide further information and justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards
Governor

Enclosures

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

State Emergency Declarations (141 JBE 2023, 148 JBE 2023, 154 JBE 2023)