

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

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**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION
COVER LETTER**

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

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

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5170 (Stafford Act), as implemented at 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Louisiana effective February 11, 2021, as a result of a recent severe winter weather event. A system of heavy rains, wintry precipitation, and freezing temperatures began moving across Louisiana on February 11, 2021, and a second similar system followed on February 17, 2021. The impacts of the wintry precipitation and low temperatures continue to pose a serious threat to the lives and property of the people of Louisiana.

In response to this situation, I took the appropriate action under state law and declared a statewide emergency (20 JBE 2021) on February 11, 2021. Furthermore, I directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan in support of the statewide emergency declaration in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act. A copy of that declaration is attached, as well as a copy of 21 JBE 2021, in which I provided additional guidance for emergency response. As of the time of this request, 63 parishes have issued parish emergency declarations.

On February 17, 2021, I requested a Presidential Emergency Declaration in order to obtain Direct Federal Assistance and Public Assistance, Category B, to assist the state in providing immediate support to survivors of this storm. Louisiana is appreciative that the Emergency Declaration was granted the following day, and was designated as FEMA-3556-EM. After the storms left the state, and we were able to begin assessing the impacts from extended record-breaking freezing temperatures and precipitation, I have determined that additional federal assistance is needed.

I am requesting Public Assistance, Category B (all Emergency Protective Measures) for all parishes in the State, specifically:

Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, DeSoto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, LaSalle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Terrebonne, Union, Vermilion, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana, and Winn.

I am also requesting all categories of assistance available through the Individual Assistance Program for the following northern parishes:

Avoyelles, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Caldwell, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, DeSoto, East Carroll, Franklin, Grant, Jackson, LaSalle, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, Tensas, Union, Vernon, Webster, West Carroll, and Winn, as well as Calcasieu and East Baton Rouge.

Finally, I am requesting Hazard Mitigation Assistance statewide.

DISASTER IMPACTS

The National Weather Service (NWS) reports that the weather systems that brought snow, sleet, freezing rain, and record low temperatures to most of the state were caused by “one of the coldest air masses to ever reach the region.” Shreveport recorded its lowest temperature ever at 1°F, which was 19 degrees colder than the previous record low for that date.

The city of Monroe also recorded its lowest daily temperature ever, at 16°F. These conditions caused numerous power and water outages, as well as dangerous road conditions that inhibited State and local government efforts to respond to individual emergencies. After the initial system moved out of the state on February 15th, a second winter storm passed through the state on February 17th. This second system delivered at least four (4) inches of snow, sleet, and ice across the I-20 corridor. The additional snow, sleet, freezing rain and low temperatures exacerbated the icy conditions and caused additional utility outages and dangerous road conditions. Large sections of I-20 were closed from February 17 through February 20.

Tragically, these dangerous conditions caused six (6) deaths. One individual in Caddo Parish and another in Lafayette Parish died of exposure. Another Lafayette man died after slipping on ice and hitting his head. A Calcasieu Parish man slipped on ice and drowned in a swimming pool. Finally, two Avoyelles Parish residents died from carbon monoxide poisoning after a generator was placed in the camper in which they were staying.

On the morning of February 16, 2021, the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) reported more than 200,000 Louisiana residents were without power. State and local entities worked continuously to restore power to these individuals, but it took several days to restore power to the majority of those residences, businesses, and public facilities. In many cases, these homes lacked the ability to provide heat for several days while the temperatures outside remained well below freezing. At one point, seven (7) hospitals and six (6) nursing homes relied solely on generator power.

The Louisiana Department of Health (“LDH”) reports that, by the morning of February 18, 2021, there were 98 weather-related water outages affecting a population of 245,676. At the same time, LDH reported 235 weather-related Boil Water Advisories (“BWAs”) for a population of 1,167,041 Louisiana residents. Approximately 25% of the entire state’s population was either without water or without reliable drinking water. The continued freezing temperatures slowed efforts to resolve the outages. As of LDH’s latest report on February 25, there were still 12 weather-related water outages and 166 BWAs for a total population of almost 500,000 Louisiana residents. Because of frozen or damaged water mains and distribution systems, several hospitals in the State have been without ready access to water for individual use or to generate heat in the operation of boilers.

As previously mentioned, many roadways throughout the northern section of the state were closed due to icy conditions. Some motorists were stranded on the dangerous roadways, requiring state and local assets to take emergency measures to ensure the safety of those individuals. An additional threat occurred after temperatures finally rose. Daytime thaws in the northern part of

the state led to overnight re-freezing of the water, resulting in numerous patches of dangerous black ice.

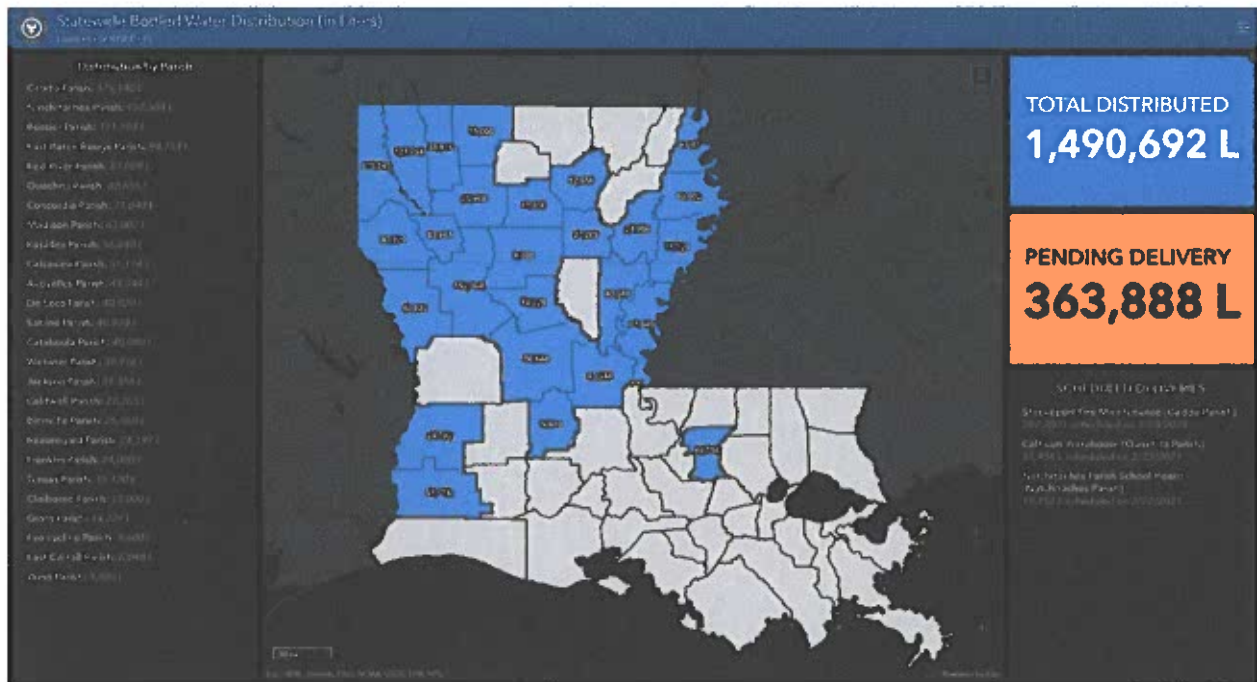
Many schools in Louisiana would normally be closed February 15-19 due to the Mardi Gras holiday. With the attendance difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well multiple closures due to hurricanes, many of those school systems planned to conduct classes this week in order to make up for some of those lost days. Unfortunately, due to the winter storm, many parishes were unable to conduct classes during that week. From February 17 to 19, an average of 26 parish school systems remained closed due to the weather. By Monday, February 22, seven (7) parish school systems were still unable to reopen due to weather-related difficulties. These additional closures only exacerbate the difficulties our schools have already faced this year.

STATE RESPONSE

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:

GOHSEP activated its EOC to Level 3 on February 11, 2021, and is still coordinating response measures across the state, including but not limited to:

- Delivery of bottled water to essential facilities without potable water;
- Delivery of bulk water to critical facilities;
- Delivery of water tanks for fire protection services without water; and
- Transportation of essential staff to facilities.



LDH is tracking water outages and boil advisories around the state, and coordinating response measures. Of particular concern are any water outages or boil advisories affecting critical medical facilities. LDH has coordinated with GOHSEP to provide bulk water to numerous facilities requiring water to conduct treatments. Dialysis centers were a critical concern during this particular event.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) tracked dangerous road conditions and de-iced roads when possible. Numerous bridges and overpasses throughout the state were closed for days due to icing. DOTD continues to assess the impacts of the winter storm.

Louisiana State Police (“LSP”) opened its EOC on February 14, 2021. Throughout the incident, LSP coordinated with other state agencies such as DOTD in order to provide assets to help keep roads open or divert traffic from dangerous roads. LSP also coordinated transportation of vital items like generators and bulk water to critical facilities. The LSP Emergency Services Unit (“ESU”) performed 171 facility inspections in response to over 115 notifications of chemical releases during the incident. Overall, the LSP responded statewide to 435 crashes and over 700 motorist assists in the icy conditions.

The Louisiana National Guard (“LANG”), contributed vehicles, equipment, and soldiers to assist both LSP and DOTD. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, LANG has concurrently deployed assets around the state to assist response to a variety of disasters.

Total costs incurred by State agencies up to this point are \$13,128,111.80. This amount is almost double the threshold established by FEMA for determining that a disaster is beyond the State’s capacity. It is fully expected that when final costs are identified from parish and local municipalities, it will further support that this event had significant financial impacts.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Sixty-three (63) of 64 parishes have currently issued emergency declarations. Parishes and municipalities have dealt with the same conditions on their local roads as State agencies have on State highways. Local governments have also expended significant funding and efforts related to providing necessary items and services for survivors without heat or water.

With the widespread and prolonged power and water outages around the state, local governments have explored numerous options for providing safe locations in which residents could shelter. A number of parishes and municipalities have opened warming centers for individuals

without power or heat. Several others partnered with local volunteer organizations to provide warming centers. The following parishes opened and staffed warming centers in public facilities: Allen, Ascension, Beauregard, Evangeline, Morehouse, Orleans, Ouachita, and St. Landry.

Depending upon COVID-19 procedures in place for their area, some parishes arranged to shelter individuals in hotels to provide Non-Congregate Sheltering (“NCS”). Those parishes include Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, and Lafayette.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER (“VOADS”)

Despite the many challenges facing volunteer organizations at this time, numerous VOADs were able to provide assistance to thousands of individuals during this event. The following are examples of assistance that these organizations provided:

Acadiana Regional Coalition on Homelessness and Housing (“ARCH”)- provided NCS for 597 households for an average of eight (8) nights. The majority of that sheltering occurred in Lafayette Parish, but ARCH also provided sheltering for households in the parishes of Acadia, Iberia, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, and Vermilion.

American Red Cross- supported three (3) families in NCS in Pointe Coupee Parish. They also distributed 28 cases of water in Shreveport and housed four (4) families there.

Catholic Charities- distributed 450 non-perishable meals and 100 cases of water to residents in southwest Louisiana. They also distributed meals, care packages, baby formula, diapers, and water to more than 500 residents in northwest Louisiana.

First Methodist- Distributed food, water, formula, diapers, and personal hygiene supplies to more than 500 individuals in northwest Louisiana.

Food Bank of NWLA- Distributed \$872,997 in food and water throughout the parishes of Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Red River, and Webster.

Giving Back Foundation- provided meals to more than 500 individuals.

Global Citizen USA- Delivered supplies to Lake Charles, Kinder, and Elton.

Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank- Assisted Louisiana Regional Food Banks across the state.

Hope Connections- Supported homeless sheltering in Shreveport.

Providence House- Provided meals to the community, as well as food and shelter for 60 individuals.

Salvation Army- Operated a warming center in Alexandria. They also supported homeless sheltering in Shreveport.

Second Harvest Food Bank of South Louisiana- provided 3,000 meals to displaced families in local hotels. Distributed meals and 30 pallets of bottled water in Lake Charles and 18 pallets in Shreveport.

United Way- assisting with warming center overflow in Alexandria. They also operated 2-1-1 phone line to provide information on available disaster relief resources. United Way held two (2) public events in which they distributed 1,250 cases of bottled water to the public in southwest Louisiana and distributed food and water to more than 300 individuals in northwest Louisiana.

PREVIOUS DISASTERS DURING THE LAST 24 MONTHS

DR-4439 Severe Storms and Tornadoes - April 24 through June 25, 2019

On May 21, 2019, I requested a major disaster declaration for Individual and Public Assistance due to severe storms and tornadoes that catastrophically affected the parishes of Lincoln, Morehouse, and Union. A major disaster declaration was subsequently declared on June 3, 2019.

EM-3416/DR-4458 Hurricane Barry - July 10-15, 2019

A major declaration was declared on August 27, 2019, that made emergency protective measures including direct federal assistance under the Public Assistance program available. Current estimates of costs associated with this disaster are \$51,000,000.

EM-3413/DR-4462 Louisiana Flooding - May 10 through July 24, 2019

An emergency declaration was requested and declared on May 29, 2019 as a result of historic and continuous flood fighting. On September 19, 2019 a Major Disaster was declared. Current estimates of costs incurred for this disaster are \$28,000,000.

EM-3527 TS Cristobal - June 5-9, 2020

An Emergency Declaration was issued for this incident on June 7, 2020, authorizing Public Assistance, Category B statewide.

EM-3538/DR-4559 Hurricane Laura - August 22-27, 2020

Hurricane Laura made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane and was eventually designated as one of the strongest storms to ever strike Louisiana. It devastated southwest Louisiana, leaving many areas without reliable infrastructure for months. Louisiana and FEMA have engaged in a massive joint housing effort for thousands of survivors. Those efforts are made more difficult by the destruction of most of the previously-available housing stock in the area. Current estimates for costs associated with this disaster are \$1.3 billion.

EM-3543 Hurricane Sally - September 13-16, 2020

An Emergency Declaration was issued for this incident on September 14, 2020, authorizing Public Assistance, Category B statewide.

EM-3547/DR-4570 Hurricane Delta - October 6-10, 2020

In an unprecedented occurrence, Hurricane Delta made landfall approximately fifteen (15) miles from the site of Hurricane Laura's initial landfall, just six weeks later. Local governments had barely begun to recover from Laura when many of the same facilities and homes were further devastated by a second major hurricane.

EM-3549/DR-4577 Hurricane Zeta - October 26-29, 2020

Just a few weeks after a second hurricane made landfall in southwest Louisiana in 2020, a third hurricane struck the southeast portion of the state. An Emergency Declaration was issued on October 27, 2020, to provide assistance for emergency protective measures. After state, local, and federal staff assessed the damages, a major disaster declaration was issued on January 12, 2021 to provide Individual Assistance and additional categories of Public Assistance.

EM-3459/DR-4484 COVID-19 Pandemic - January 20, 2020-continuing

After President Trump issued an Emergency Declaration for all states, I requested and was granted a major disaster declaration on March 24, 2020. To date, Louisiana has incurred approximately \$850 million in PA costs associated with responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the State and local governments are suffering from the same loss of revenue affecting all governments around the country at this time. The impacts from this pandemic extend far beyond the pecuniary, however. State and local assets have been incredibly taxed from devoting extraordinary amounts of both time and personnel to provide testing for the general public, to procure and distribute Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) to those individuals performing essential jobs, to procure and distribute medical equipment to those frontline individuals who are directly engaged in the fight against COVID-19, and most recently to provide vaccines to hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout Louisiana.

This disaster is the most impactful on this list with regard to the state's ability to respond to and recover from disasters. As indicated previously, Louisiana suffered through one of most intense hurricane seasons in its history in 2020. In response to each of those hurricanes, state and local personnel often had to be pulled from COVID-19 response in order to respond to the more immediate threat. The response efforts themselves were inhibited by necessary safeguards against COVID-19 such as social distancing. The amount of buses required to transport survivors increased immensely because of limitations on the number of passengers. The state's normal sheltering plans had to be re-written because congregate settings could not be used to accommodate the thousands of evacuees. Louisiana has engaged in a historic effort to shelter evacuees from three different hurricanes in hotels throughout the state and is still continuing that effort.

INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FACTORS

Damage Assessments

Because of accessibility issues throughout the impacted northern parishes, Louisiana began assessing damages by asking homeowners to utilize the Survey 123 program, designed in coordination with FEMA Region 6, to capture and categorize damages to their homes. As of the date of this letter, 2,126 surveys have been submitted to the state and FEMA is validating damage virtually by reviewing the raw data from the survey. They indicate that, thus far, 81 homes have been reported destroyed by weather related damages, 317 have major damage, 1,212 have minor damage, and 258 were affected. State and local governments will work with FEMA to validate the full extent of uninsured damages, but these preliminary responses indicate significant, widespread damages to residents throughout the northern parishes. Reported damages include internal damage from broken pipes, as well as damage from fallen trees caused by frozen precipitation.



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State Fiscal Capacity

Attached to this request is the most recent information on Total Taxable Resources, as published by the Office of Economic Policy under the U.S. Department of Treasury. It should be noted that these estimates do not include any information beyond 2018. Of particular importance at this time is the lack of data resulting from the current COVID-19 public health emergency.

Since I initially declared a statewide public health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, Louisiana’s economy has been extraordinarily impacted by the loss of jobs throughout the state, a severe reduction in our petroleum industry, and the loss of almost tourism dollars that normally constitute a significant portion of income for the state. With the necessary safety measures in place to combat the spread of COVID-19, Louisiana has seen more citizens file for unemployment than at any other time in our history.

In conjunction with this historic loss of revenue, the State has still expended substantial funds to respond to both the pandemic and multiple hurricanes, as has already been discussed. The cumulative effect of these mass expenditures, in combination with a sharp decrease in incoming revenue, severely limits Louisiana’s ability to assist citizens who are survivors of natural disasters.

The chart below clearly demonstrates that Louisiana’s population falls below the national average in income, and already required a higher level of governmental assistance before the recent disasters. The recent disasters have only increased the hardships that our citizens face on a daily basis.

| <i>Percentage of the population:</i> | <i>for whom poverty status is determined</i> | <i>already receiving governmental assistance</i> | <i>Pre-disaster unemployment rate</i> | <i>65 years and older</i> | <i>18 years and younger</i> | <i>with a disability</i> | <i>who speak a language other than English</i> |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Data Source | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau | ACS, U.S. Census Bureau |
| National Average | 13.1% | 11.3% SNAP | 4.9% | 16.0% | 22.4% | 12.6% | 8.3% |
| State Average | 18.6% | 15.0% SNAP | 6.4% | 15.5% | 23.6% | 15.4% | 2.8% |

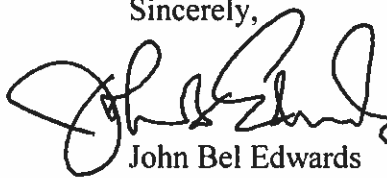
Summary

I have determined that this winter storm is of such severity and magnitude that effective recovery is beyond the capabilities of the state and local governments and that supplemental federal assistance is necessary. Therefore, I am requesting a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration to provide Public Assistance, Category B statewide, and Individual Assistance for the northern parishes noted earlier in this letter. Additionally, I am requesting Hazard Mitigation statewide.

I urge you to provide an expedited declaration in order to provide immediate federal relief to these highly impacted communities. I anticipate that once we have the opportunity to fully assess damages around the state, a number of additional parishes will need federal assistance to allow them to recover from this disaster. I hereby certify that state and local government obligations and expenditures for the current disaster will comply with all applicable cost sharing requirements of the Stafford Act.

I have designated James B. Waskom as the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) and Casey Tingle as the Alternate GAR. I have designated Casey Tingle as the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) for this request. Director Waskom and Mr. Tingle 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 Declaration (20 JBE 2021)
Amendment to State Emergency Declaration (21 JBE 2021)
NWS Report
Survey 1-2-3 dashboard