

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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**REQUEST FOR MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER**

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D. C. 20500

Through: George A. Robinson
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VI
800 North Loop 288
Denton, TX 76209-3698

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 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 hereby request a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Louisiana as a result of recent heavy rains, severe storms, and flooding. On May 17, 2021, a system of heavy rains and severe storms caused flash flooding in several parishes in the state. This event has caused major damage to private homes and caused the state and local governments to incur significant costs associated with saving lives and preserving public health and safety. The damages from this event, in conjunction with the state's response efforts in the midst of our current fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, have overwhelmed the capabilities of state and local resources. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and local governments. Further, in accordance with 44 C.F.R. §206.36, federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the state and local governments, disaster relief organizations, and compensation received by insurance for disaster-related losses.

I took the appropriate action under state law and declared a statewide emergency (89 JBE 2021) on May 17, 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.

I am requesting a Major Disaster Declaration authorizing **Individual Assistance** for the following

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parishes:

Ascension, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Iberville and Lafayette.

Specifically, I request all parts of **Individual Assistance**, including Housing Assistance, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Care Management, Crisis Counseling, and Other Needs Assistance together with but not limited to medical, dental, childcare, and funeral expenses. I am also requesting Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance and Hazard Mitigation statewide.

DISASTER IMPACTS

On May 17, 2021, the National Weather Service (NWS) reported that severe weather, including excessive heavy rainfall, would begin to move throughout the state. It was anticipated that the heavy rain would last four (4) to five (5) days. During the week, multiple rounds of heavy rainfall and severe storms moved across the state. The severe weather and rainfall led to continuous flooding in several south Louisiana parishes. Several tornadoes were also reported to have caused damage to homes as a result of the weather.

Several area rivers are in flood stages and coastal flooding is ongoing. Strong east-southeast winds of twenty (20) to thirty (30) miles per hour continued. These winds piled water onto east and south-facing shores which resulted in coastal flooding of two (2) to three (3) feet above ground level. These winds have impeded the draining of rivers in Southern Louisiana.

Many residents of Southwestern Louisiana reported catastrophic damages from the severe weather and flash flooding. Schools and businesses were forced to close in anticipation and as a result of the storms. Several high water rescues were conducted by various volunteer agencies. Additionally, damage to homes and businesses are still being assessed.

The Louisiana Department of Health has released a report stating that there have been five (5) fatalities reported as a result of this event. It was also reported that six (6) parishes are still under a boil advisory and one parish reported a water outage.

High standing water and flooding created several road blockages in local communities. Additionally, several main highways were closed because they were under water, including I-10 interstate in Baton Rouge between Highland Road and Siegen Lane and the Siegen Lane exit.

It is very important to note that this event has been unlike other previous disasters. Severe storms and flooding began on Monday, May 17, 2021 and continued for four (4) days. While pictures taken on May 17th may show some damage, many do not show additional damage caused by continuous rainfall in subsequent days. Therefore, we are asking for special consideration in that the totality of the situation has yet to be actualized because many parishes like Ascension, East Baton Rouge and Iberville are still in the de-watering stage. It may take another week or two before this process to be completed.

Moreover, policy may suggest that minor damage is non-structural damage to a home when the waterline is in the floor system of a manufactured home damage from floodwaters that are eighteen (18) inches or below. However, it is imperative to note that PDAs and/or pictures may not reflect the fact that a home may have received six (6) inches of rain on Monday, May 17th and continued to receive water in their home over the entire storm period.

In sum, the State of Louisiana is still actively dealing with the aftermath of Hurricanes Laura, Delta, Zeta, and the 2021 Winter Weather Event. State and local economies are still dealing with the negative effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on health, jobs, and businesses. The damages from this disaster in conjunction with the state's response efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts from 2020 and 2021 disasters, have overwhelmed the capabilities of state and local resources.

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 May 17, 2021, and is still coordinating response measures across the state.
- The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) continues to track medical infrastructure as the Region 5 area (Lake Charles) remains vulnerable and their recovery is slowed by these recent storms. Five (5) hospitals took on water while two (2) hospitals had to be evacuated. Oceans Behavioral Hospital evacuated nineteen (19) patients which were absorbed into Louisiana Behavioral Health Facility in Shreveport. Calcasieu Oaks Behavioral Hospital also evacuated patients.
- The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) tracked dangerous road conditions. As of May 20, 2021, several DOTD Districts, including Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Baton Rouge, are all activated and engaged in flood fighting operations in response to this event.
- District sixty-one (61) is also supporting the Iberville Parish Aqua Dam operations on LA Hwy 75 in the vicinity of Plaquemine, LA, by providing temporary traffic signals. They are also providing DOTD's Aqua Dam to supplement Iberville Parish's due to floodwaters on LA Hwy 75, a main highway in the parish.
- Twenty-four (24) State Fire Marshal personnel, making up nine (9) boat teams, deployed to Lake Charles to assist the Lake Charles Fire Department with flooding response. Seventy-eight (78) residents and five (5) pets were rescued. Subsequently, assets were moved to Baton Rouge where six (6) boat teams were deployed to assist with flood evacuations. This resulted in an additional eight (8) individuals being rescued.
- The Louisiana National Guard (LANG) utilized forty-five (45) high water vehicles, nineteen (19) boats, one (1) emergency water truck and one (1) Engineer Assessment Team

in response to the flooding event. Twenty-five (25) people and two (2) pets were rescued in the 10 parishes in south Louisiana in which they were deployed.

- The Cemetery Reinternment Task Force (CRTF) has been activated to address compromised vaults. Early reports suggest that twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) graves have been damaged. This assessment is ongoing.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Local governments have also expended significant time and funding related to flood fighting efforts. Parishes and municipalities have been the victims of severe trauma brought on by this event. Many continue to struggle with recovery as water has still not receded in most areas.

For example, Ascension Parish and Assumption Parishes still have several roads closed because of high water. Sandbag operations and pumping are ongoing. Many homes have taken on water, while others continue to be threatened by high standing water.

Calcasieu parish was forced to transfer sixty-seven (67) residents to Non-Congregate Sheltering (“NCS”) as a result of the severe storms. Numerous roads are closed due to high water and sandbags are still being distributed. Calcasieu parish also reported that multiple lift stations are inundated with water. Additionally, many buildings are besieged with water including multiple schools, several hospitals and clinics, McNeese Street Clean Water Plant, Burton Coliseum, Calcasieu Parish Courthouse, McNeese Police, several Nursing Homes, Calcasieu Coroner’s Office, Juvenile Detention Center, and Water Works District 12 of Ward 3. Finally, one (1) fatality has been confirmed by the Calcasieu Parish Coroner's Office. Finally, it must be highlighted that water in Calcasieu parish has still not receded; therefore, damage assessments are not complete.

East Baton Rouge (“EBR”) parish also saw severe damage. Public schools and parish offices were forced to close. EBR established a reception center at the Baton Rouge Airport for the individuals who had been rescued. At one point, nearly fifty (50) citizens were relocated to the BR Airport. An additional seven (7) citizens from the St. George area were housed in a hotel due to severe property damage and flooding inside of their homes. EBR anticipates that it will continue non-congregate sheltering (NCS) as they work with partners to find alternative housing options for its residents.

Due to flood inundation, the Iberville Parish Council had to deploy aqua dams along Hwy 75 in Plaquemine. Concrete dams are still in place to hold back water along portions of Hwy 75. Damage assessments are currently estimated to include eight (8) homes with minor damage. Another thirty (30) homes have reported damage however, because the water has not receded, the full extent of damage caused cannot be assessed at this time. Sandbagging operations are ongoing for delivery to several drop-off locations throughout the parish. Iberville parish continues to experience extremely high water levels along Bayou Manchac, Alligator Bayou, Bayou Plaquemine, Intracoastal Waterway, Bayou Sorrel and Bayou Pigeon.

On May 17, 2021, Lafayette parish received a high volume of calls with reports of street and vehicle flooding, as well as numerous power outages. The Lafayette Fire Department also performed home rescues of storm victims in the parish.

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:

- Crisis CleanUp activated a hotline for survivors affected by recent floods in South Louisiana through June 4, 2021. As of May 22, there are 33 survivors who have called the hotline to request services from volunteers and non-profits. Crisis Cleanup is connecting volunteers to survivors to assist with cutting fallen trees, drywall/flooring/appliance removal, roof tarping and mold mitigation.
- New Life Ministries has donated more than two-hundred (200) flood buckets to Catholic Charities Baton Rouge to distribute to survivors.
- Operation Blessing provided relief efforts, to include muck/gut, mud out, debris removal, etc., in Lake Charles.
- Catholic Charities of Baton Rouge provided services for more than twenty-two (22) displaced survivors at a shelter on Southern University’s Campus. Catholic Charities provided food, hygiene kits, bottled water, rental assistance, and case management. Other response activities included canvassing neighborhoods in Baton Rouge and distributing cleaning supplies and one hundred (100) flood buckets to survivors.
- Mercy Chefs deployed to Lake Charles and distributed over six thousand five hundred (6,500) meals to survivors.
- Cajun Army and Cajun Navy assisted with search/rescue, volunteer efforts and sandbag distribution. This also included helping respond to the aqua dam breach in Iberville Parish.
- American Red Cross opened a shelter in Plaquemine at the civic center for evacuees affected by the aqua dam breach. They have also opened Disaster Response Operation to support the flood event and identifying unmet needs.
- SWLA (Southwest Louisiana) Responds distributed over three thousand and five hundred (3,500) sandbags to residents and are coordinating volunteer efforts, as well as helping with muck/gut and mud out.
- Southwest Louisiana Long-Term Recovery Committee is working with funding partners, non-profits and voluntary organizations to coordinate response and long-term recovery efforts for survivors.

- Second Harvest Food Bank delivered food and water to potential evacuation shelters in Lake Charles and the Acadiana areas. They are also working with partner agencies to supply bottled water, food, and coordinate the donations of cleaning supplies.
- Catholic Charities Southwest Louisiana distributed more than five hundred (500) meals and provided gift cards to over fifty (50) survivors.
- Trinity Baptist Church mobilized a shelter and took in one hundred thirty-nine (139) displaced households.
- Acadiana Legal Services Corporation is working with survivors who may have legal challenges as result of flood damages.
- Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana is assisting flood survivors with free laundry services.
- The Salvation Army provided disaster relief services and distributed hundreds of clean up kits and over eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) in gift cards in Lake Charles and Baton Rouge.
- Capital Area United Way Baton Rouge assisting residents complete damage survey and continues to work with partner agencies to provide services/resources for immediate needs.
- Baton Rouge Emergency Aid Coalition is working with affected households to assist with their emotional/spiritual care, as well as address any immediate or unmet needs.
- Louisiana Baptists Disaster Relief is working with Baptists Disaster Relief Teams from New Orleans, Covington, Missouri, and Kentucky to help survivors with emergency relief services for muck/gut and debris removal.

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 \$62,706,649.82.

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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 \$21,218,525.00.

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 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, as 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 millions 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 below, Louisiana suffered through one of most intense hurricane seasons in its history in 2020. In 2021, Louisiana parishes were also victims of a severe winter event. In response to each of those disasters, 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.

EM-3556/DR-4590 Severe Winter Storms – February 11-19, 2021

In an unprecedented occurrence, a system of heavy rains and wintry precipitation began moving across Louisiana on February 11, 2021, and a second, similar system, followed on February 16, 2021. After state, local, and federal staff assessed the damages, a major disaster declaration was issued on March 6, 2021, to provide Individual Assistance and Public Assistance.

INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FACTORS

Damage Assessments

As of May 28, 2021, two thousand five hundred twenty-two (2,522) surveys have been submitted to the State. They indicate that five (5) homes have been destroyed by weather related damages, six hundred forty (640) have major damage, one thousand eighty-four (1,084) have minor damage, and one hundred thirty-six (136) were affected.

State and local governments will continue to work with FEMA to validate the full extent of uninsured damages, but these preliminary responses indicate significant, widespread damages to residents throughout the Southwestern parishes. Reports include homes that received significant water damage.



Photo Credit: John Balance - The Advocate



Photo Credit: Travis Spradling - The Advocate



Photo Credit: Ashley Ruiz - BRProud News



Photo Credit: EBR MOHSEP



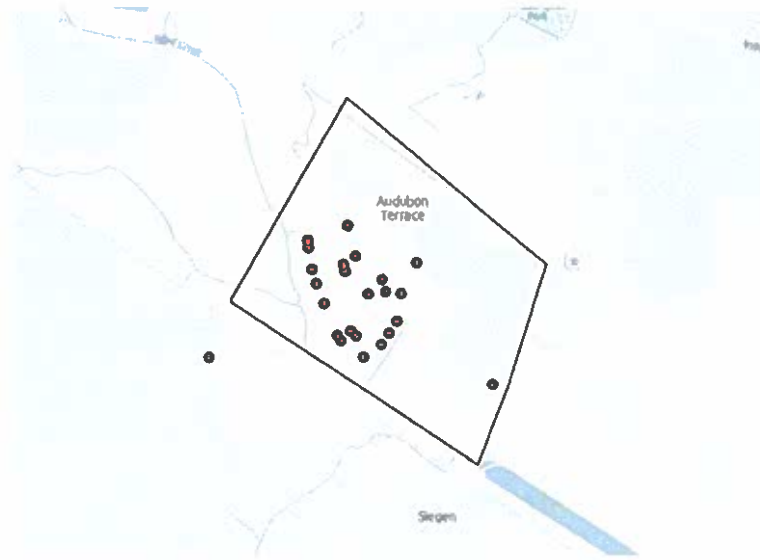
Photo Credit: Calcasieu OHSEP
Clover Drive

As of this date, EBR is still dealing with the effects of this flood. By utilizing the self-reporting method of IA PDAs in lieu of the more traditional hands-on methods, we have expedited the process of identifying damage homes. However, we do not have a complete assessment of the magnitude of the damage. The neighborhood of Morning Glen, in EBR, has sixty-two (62) self-reported homes in Survey 123 with twenty-four (24) verified as major damage by FEMA. The neighborhood has approximately two hundred forth-eight (248) households.

We are continuing to encourage citizens to report damages but know that we are still missing households that have been substantially affected by the flood. In addition, the local public works has documented over one hundred (100) homes in this specific area with large piles of storm related debris on the curb that is ready for pick up. The following map shows the number of homes with major damage in the Morning Glen neighborhood.

Morning Glen

PDA Summary: WebEOC Incident 21-014 Heavy Rainfall



62
DAMAGE.LA.GOV REPORTS

24
FEMA-VERIFIED PDAS (MAJOR+)

243
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2020, ESRI)

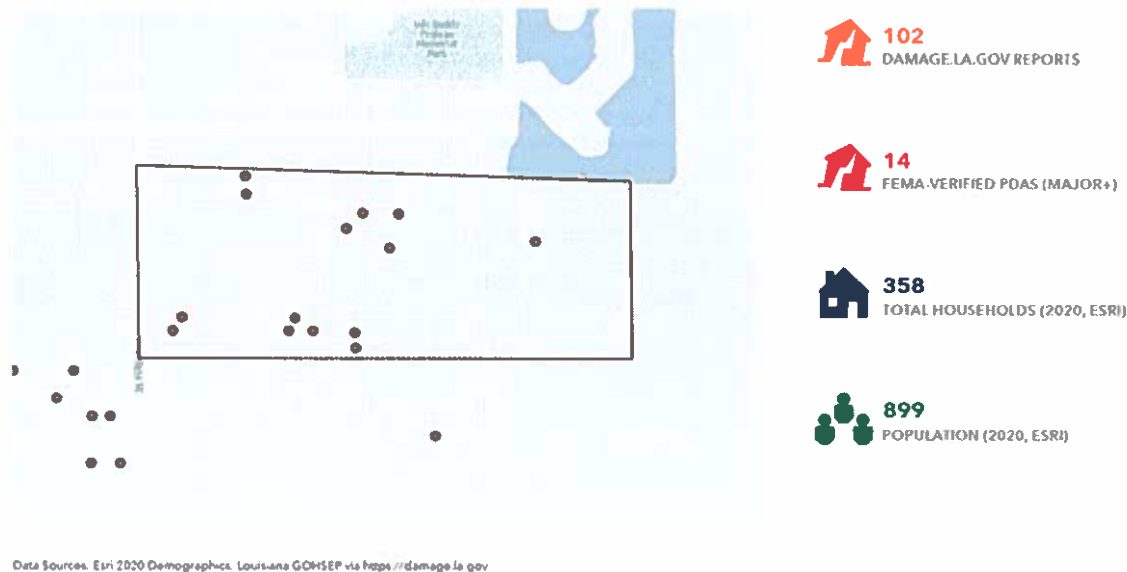
623
POPULATION (2020, ESRI)

Data Sources: Esri 2020 Demographics, Louisiana GOHSEP via <https://damage.la.gov>

We also saw this same trend in Calcasieu parish. The area of Clover Drive and Meadow Drive contains approximately three hundred fifty-eight (358) households. Conversely, this area has only submitted one hundred two (102) self-reported documents. The following map shows the number homes with major damage in the neighborhood.

Clover Drive & Meadow Drive

PDA Summary: WebEOC Incident 21-014 Heavy Rainfall



In both examples provided above, the self-reporting and validation process are estimated to represent less than forty percent (40%) of the properties with damage and the actual damages and losses are still being identified. Further, the most recent information indicates over three thousand one hundred (3,100) claims have been filed through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Given the penetration rates of NFIP coverage in these areas, the actual number of damaged homes is likely in excess of six thousand (6,000) with a Destroyed/Major rate of over fourteen (14%) percent.

State Fiscal Capacity

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 all 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 the aforementioned historic loss of revenue, the state still continues to expend substantial funds to respond to both the pandemic, recent hurricanes, and other severe weather events. The state also continues to struggle with recovery from these unprecedented events. All of which severely limits Louisiana's ability to assist citizens who are survivors of natural disasters. The recent disasters have only increased the hardships that our citizens face on a daily basis.

SUMMARY

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May 28, 2021

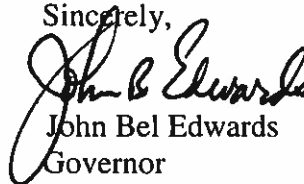
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I have determined that this severe storm event is of such severity and magnitude that effective recovery is beyond the capabilities of the state and local governments and that supplemental federal assistance is necessary. Therefore, I am requesting a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration to provide **Individual Assistance** for **Ascension, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Iberville and Lafayette** parishes including Housing Assistance, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Care Management, Crisis Counseling and Other Needs Assistance, together with but not limited to, medical, dental, childcare, and funeral expenses. Additionally, I request Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance and Hazard Mitigation statewide.

Due to the magnitude of damages in these Southern Louisiana parishes, I urge you to provide a declaration in order to provide immediate federal relief to these highly impacted communities. I anticipate that, after we have the opportunity to fully assess the damages, more parishes and/or residents 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 (89 JBE 2021)

IA-PDA Summary