



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

July 28, 2023

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

Through: Lori Ehrlich
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 1, Boston, MA 02110

Dear Mr. President:

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 implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that a major disaster be declared for the State of New Hampshire. This request is due to a severe winter storm and flooding from April 30 – May 1, 2023, that resulted in damages being validated throughout the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) process in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Merrimack, and Strafford Counties and overwhelmed State and local resources requiring an immediate and urgent response. I hereby request a designation of the full Public Assistance Program for Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Merrimack, and Strafford Counties and a statewide designation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

As a direct result of the incident, NH sustained major damages to state and local infrastructure that led to numerous requests for state assistance. Reported damages were concentrated in Carroll County where the heaviest rain fell; however, other areas of the state saw intense rain and flooding that threatened public safety and damaged infrastructure. The impact of this event was felt throughout the local mutual aid and state systems as personnel and assets were diverted to the incident area. The response consumed staff time and exhausted available resources due to significant flash flooding conditions that caused extensive roadway destruction and left debris that restricted travel and emergency operations. Fortunately, there were no deaths or serious injuries associated with this incident.

Based on Initial Damage Assessments (IDA) reported by the local communities and state agencies, the Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) requested the Joint PDA process on May 18, and they began on May 30, 2023. The Joint PDAs included the following counties: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, Strafford, and Sullivan. The effects of this incident in the State of New Hampshire are evident as demonstrated in the Public Assistance enclosure.

While the Joint PDAs were focused on Belknap, Carroll, and Merrimack counties, IDAs coordinated by HSEM prior to the Joint PDAs reported damages throughout the State of New Hampshire. From data collected during the IDA process that the State of New Hampshire completed, more than \$3.1 million in costs were incurred related to this incident.

Though the State indicator \$2,438,226 (\$1.77 per capita) was not exceeded during this incident in validated Public Assistance costs, the damages well exceeded that amount. The figures captured in Enclosure B reflect uninsured losses and only those that meet FEMA project eligibility; the overall costs were significantly higher. The Joint PDAs focused on reviewing damages to Category B – Emergency Protective Measures, Category C – Roads and Bridges, and Category G – Parks, Recreation, and Other. At the conclusion of the Joint PDAs, \$2,125,026 were validated in eligible Public Assistance costs.

FEMA additionally excluded more than \$50,000 in previously validated damages within Carroll County due to procurement concerns. There was additionally over \$150,000 in initial damages reported by communities not included due to the same concerns. There was no consideration of exigent circumstances that required the Towns to conduct the necessary repairs in the immediate timeframe that they had following the incident period. For example, in the Town of Albany, had the community not utilized the contractor they did to make necessary repairs it would have required the road to remain closed for an extended period. The delay in repairing and re-opening these roads ultimately would have impacted residents' abilities to access critical facilities such as: hospitals, fire or police stations and other like facilities. Lastly, it is important to note that two of these Towns have never participated in the FEMA Public Assistance program before.

NH Department of Transport (NH DOT) reported over \$100,000 in damages to federal highway jurisdiction roadways.

The communities that sustained the highest per capita impact in Carroll County were Eaton (\$65.79/capita), Madison/Village District of Edelweiss (\$63.10/capita), Ossipee (\$271.78/capita) and Tamworth (\$40.26/capita). In Belknap County, both Barnstead (30.70/capita) and New Hampton (\$19.29) had the highest per capita impacts. In Merrimack County, the highest per capita impact was the town of Hill (\$48.84/capita), Danbury (\$21.04/capita), and Wilmot (\$18.13/capita).

While almost all roads in the Town of Ossipee sustained some damage, there are approximately seven (7) roads that sustained significant damages. Construction of the roads are mixed - both dirt and paved. Damages range from culvert damages to shoulder damages and full road washouts. In total, roads were impassable for approximately 24 hours. There are about 6 houses that were unable to be accessed by emergency vehicles during the time where the roads were impassable. Even after roads were made passable for emergency purposes, additional repairs were required. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, the Town of Ossipee had \$1,188,207 (\$271.78/capita) in validated damages. In 2022, the budget for the highways and streets in the community was \$1,240,050 which would be 90% of the annual appropriation if the incident occurred during that budget.

Within the Town of Madison, not including the Village District of Edelweiss, there are approximately 10 roads that sustained damages. Construction of the roads are mixed with both dirt

and paved roads. Damages ranged from overwhelmed culverts to shoulder washouts and roads with pavement undermining. In total, town roads were impassable for approximately 24 hours following the incident. A state road was closed for approximately 48 hours, due to damage from this storm. This closure functioned as the main route to the nearest hospital, seeing that a detour was opened it added an approximately 30-minutes to the transport time to that hospital.

The Town of Eaton sustained damages to several roadways. Damages range from culvert displacement, shoulder and roadway washouts, and roads that were partially undermined. One road was impassable for approximately two days requiring residents to make use of a lengthy detour. Situations such as these present a grave risk to the residents should the need have arisen for the utilization of emergency services.

Individual Assistance requests from residents have been managed by HSEM and a total of four (4) cases were received. Additional cases likely went unreported. One (1) of those cases have been moved to long term recovery and assistance is being coordinated through the NH Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. This resident, like many others did not have adequate flood insurance on their residence or belongings and therefore must pay for these costs out of pocket. This has created a significant financial hardship. The State remains committed to ensuring residents are aided in applying for other types of assistance programs. The State anticipates that there are many unreported cases of damages due to this incident transpiring.

Though at the State level Community Lifelines remained green throughout the entirety of the incident, individual communities were unable to maintain a green status for their individual lifelines.

Roadway impacts hindered Transportation, Health and Medical as well as Safety and Security, causing most impacted communities to operate in a yellow status for these lifelines until the water receded and roadways could be inspected and temporarily repaired. Though no serious injuries occurred during the incident, the State was made aware of at least one patient transported across a flooded river in Carroll County by a Swift Water Rescue team to an awaiting ambulance that was then transported to an area hospital.

A Weather Impact Summary was requested and received from the National Weather Service and has been provided as an enclosure to this letter.

Pursuant to the intensity of this severe storm and flooding, on April 30 – May 1, 2023, I executed the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) with the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to an enhanced monitoring level. While I did not declare a State of Emergency in New Hampshire, the nature and amount of State and local governmental resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster are as follows:

1. The SEOP was executed on May 2, 2023, and I instructed the Director of HSEM to activate and staff the SEOC. At 0830 hours on May 2, 2023, the SEOC opened at an enhanced monitoring level. The SEOC was activated to monitor the situation, coordinate state response activities and to respond to local requests for assistance and resources, if necessary.

107 North Main Street, State House - Rm 208, Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Telephone (603) 271-2121 • FAX (603) 271-7640

Website: <http://www.governor.nh.gov/> • Email: governorsununu@nh.gov

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The Director was in contact with the appropriate Emergency Support Function (ESF) lead agencies to ensure an adequate and timely response to the needs of our state, should a need have been identified. On May 1, 2023, HSEM additionally requested the Recovery FEMA Integration Team staff to the SEOC during the activation. NH HSEM utilizes WebEOC and an incident was created titled, "2023 – 005 Flooding Event 01 MAY," to allow state and local agencies to log requests or actions taken as a result of the storm. The SEOC returned to steady state as of 1615 hours on May 2, 2023, ensuring that there were no immediate needs of communities in impacted areas.

Before and after the SEOC activation, the HSEM Duty Officer remained on an on-call basis 24/7, to coordinate the needs of local communities during the recovery phase.

2. ESFs that were coordinated with during the Activation included: Transportation (ESF 1), Public Works and Engineering (ESF 3), Fire Fighting (ESF 4), Emergency Management (ESF 5), Public Safety and Law Enforcement (ESF 13), and Public Information (ESF 15).
3. The NH DOT coordinated transportation, public works, and engineering needs across the state. Numerous roads across the state required debris removal and repairs to infrastructure. The NH DOT Division of Operations Bureau of Transportation Systems, Management & Operations (TSMO) maintains 24/7 staffing to address needs immediately as they arise within the State. Between the hours of midnight on April 30, 2023, and midnight on May 1, 2023, a total of 12 staff on duty in the TSMO answered over 1,300 phone and radio communications. There were 25 reported obstructions (i.e., downed trees, utilities, debris in the roadway, etc.) without lane closures and over 20 separate flooding issues without lane closures. Additionally, there were 33 separate full or partial roadway closures because of the incident. There were an additional six (6) district offices that supported the operations throughout the event.
4. The NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) monitored and coordinated response to storm impacts to rivers, dams, and public drinking water supply. DES was available for dam inspections and additional monitoring of streams, as the need arose following flash flooding and washouts. DES Water Division – Dam Bureau conducted an inspection of the Dan Hole River Dam in Ossipee which had two areas damaged as part of the storm, though neither area pose an imminent risk to the dam's stability, though it is susceptible to repeated damage should similar or worse meteorological conditions occur.
5. On May 1, 2023, the Department of Safety, Division of Emergency Services and Communications (DESC) answered nearly 1,500 calls to 911 which is nearly a 25% increase from a normal day in May. Between April 30 – May 3, 2023, DESC answered nearly 5,000 calls to 911.

The State of New Hampshire continues to manage the recovery efforts for disasters, straining state and local resources. The following is list of active disasters that the State of New Hampshire continues to work toward close out: FEMA-4329-DR (July 1, 2017 – July 2, 2017, Severe Storm and Flooding in Coos and Grafton Counties), FEMA-4355-DR (October 29, 2017 – November 1,

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2017, Severe Storm and Flooding in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Grafton, Merrimack, and Sullivan Counties), FEMA-4370-DR (March 2, 2018 – March 8, 2018, Coastal Storm and Flooding in Rockingham County), FEMA-4457-DR (July 11, 2019 – July 12, 2019, Severe Storm and Flooding in Grafton County), FEMA-4516-DR (January 20, 2020 – May 11, 2023, COVID-19 statewide), FEMA-4622-DR (July 17, 2021 – July 19, 2021, Severe Storm and Flooding in Cheshire County), FEMA-4624-DR (July 29, 2021 – August 2, 2021, Severe Storm and Flooding in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties), and FEMA-4693-DR (December 22, 2022 – December 25, 2022, Severe Storm and Flooding in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties).

The State of New Hampshire submitted a disaster declaration for eight (8) Counties due to a severe winter storm and snowstorm that impacted communities from March 13-15. At the initial conclusion of Joint PDAs more than \$2,649,138 in damages were validated by FEMA.

Additionally, the State of New Hampshire has been impacted by severe weather between the timeframe of June 17 and July 17. Dozens of local and state agencies completed initial damage assessments which resulted in the request for Joint PDAs. Notably, the Town of Ossipee, reported another \$750,000 in damages which is statistically significant. FEMA validated 158% from the April 30 – May 1, 2023, event, meaning additional damages were determined eligible than initial damage assessments.

Given the severity and magnitude of this natural disaster and the events that have transpired during the April 30 – May 1, 2023, incident and since then, Federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the state and local governments to recover from disaster related losses. Additionally, as required by 44 CFR § 206.36 (c)(5), I certify that all state and local government obligations and expenditures for the current disaster will comply with all applicable cost sharing requirements of the Stafford Act.

For New Hampshire local jurisdictions, the greatest remaining unmet recovery need associated with this severe storm and flooding is financial assistance to help avoid economic shock to businesses and families through local property taxes. Without federal assistance the ability of the communities within the State of New Hampshire to recover in a timely manner and avoiding long-term economic damage is severely hindered.

Thank you for your consideration of this Major Disaster Declaration Request. I look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor

Enclosures: OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
B: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance
National Weather Service, Weather Impact Summary