



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
GOVERNOR'S REQUEST COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

February 23, 2024

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Through: Ms. Lori Ehrlich
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 1
220 Binney Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142

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 humbly request that you declare a Major Disaster for the counties of Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York in the state of Maine as a result of two back-to-back severe coastal storms occurring between the incident period of January 9, 2024, and January 13, 2024. Specifically, I am requesting Public Assistance (PA) categories A through G and Z for the counties of Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York. I am also requesting Individual Assistance and all supporting areas for the counties of Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York. Lastly, I am requesting Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for use statewide.

Details of my request are offered in the attached Request for Presidential Disaster Declaration (OMB Control No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13) and the extent of damages are further supported with supplemental information. Validated damages for the event can be found in Enclosure A: Supplemental Information for Individual Assistance and Enclosure B: Supplemental Information for Public Assistance. Meteorological factors and precursors for this severe storm and flood event have also been supplied and are described in detail in the attached National Weather Service Event Report.

On January 10th and January 13, 2024, Maine experienced two severe back-to-back coastal storms that resulted in historical damages to both public and private infrastructure across the entirety of Maine's coastline. Moderate to major coastal flooding occurred first on January 10th with the alignment of an astronomical high tide cycle, storm surge and large battering nearshore waves. Coastal locations observed



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wind gusts around 60 mph, while some areas on the immediate coastline and islands, reported localized wind gusts between 70 and 80 mph. The storm resulted in substantial and widespread damages, only to be exacerbated by a second event on January 13, 2024. Moderate to major coastal flooding resulting from the alignment of the highest astronomical high tide of the month, storm surge and large battering nearshore waves devastated coastal homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. Many historical tidal gauges reported their all-time highest water levels, including Portland, which has a continuous period of record dating back to 1912. Damages between the two systems were indistinguishable and were therefore ultimately assessed as one event. National Weather Service further supported defining the two systems under one incident period given how close in proximity the storms were across the same geographical area.

The Maine Emergency Management Agency moved to a full activation of the State Emergency Operations Center with all Command and General staff and select Emergency Response Team members at 7:00a.m. on January 10, 2024. By 10:00a.m. the State Emergency Operations Center was receiving reports of a high number of destroyed homes, demolished wharfs, washed away dunes, damaged lighthouses, and inaccessible areas due to flooding across coastal counties. York County Emergency Management Agency and the Salvation Army assisted the Town of Old Orchard Beach in the standing up of a temporary evacuation center due to 50 homes residing three feet underwater. Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency reported at least twenty houses destroyed along the coastline in the Town of Bristol. Due to the extent of damage reports during the event, aerial damage assessments were conducted shortly after the event to expedite the understanding of scope and magnitude. To mobilize all state of Maine resources to assist and support response and recovery efforts across the state, a Proclamation of a State of Civil Emergency was declared for all eight coastal counties January 11, 2024.

The Maine Emergency Management Agency again moved to a full activation of the State Emergency Operations Center with all Command and General staff and select Emergency Response Team members at 7:00a.m. on January 13, 2024. Reports associated with January 13th event included destroyed seawalls, homes ready to collapse into the ocean, submerged vehicles, grounded fishing vessels, washed away fishing shacks, municipal water supply issues, floating oil tanks from unidentified sources, and hundreds of road closures. At 2:00p.m. on January 13th the Maine Warden Service responded to assist with the evacuation of an older adult facility in the Ocean Park neighborhood within the Town of Old Orchard Beach. The State Emergency Operations Center returned to enhanced monitoring on the evening of January 13th. Aerial damage assessments were once again conducted shortly after the January 13th coastal storm event to expedite the understanding of scope and magnitude, with the Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources in attendance driven by concerns to the extent of damage to the working waterfront.

Based on media reports, the number of water rescues resulting from both storms was in the dozens due to individuals trapped in flooded vehicles and structures. The vast majority of water rescues were documented in Cumberland County and York County. Hundreds of coastal businesses remained closed immediately after the January storms due to damages or hazardous road conditions. Closures continued for days to come in some of the higher impact areas, with an undefined number of businesses closed indefinitely. Public and private entities dedicated thousands of hours to water rescues, hazardous materials spills, restoring power across over 70,000 outages, and reopening roads. Substantially high flood waters and severe weather conditions also resulted in widespread debris across vegetative, construction and demolition, white goods, soil, mud, sand, vehicle, and hazardous waste classifications



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leading municipalities to activate debris management plans. To date, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has conducted six storm spill pump outs to remove oil and other hazardous materials and conducted seven vapor assessments. 211 Maine had also been activated early on in the event to aid in the collection of Initial Damage Assessment information, for which a total of 2,007 Individuals and Households Damage Assessments and 1,181 Business and Agriculture Damage Assessments were received.

FEMA Public Assistance teams and Individual Assistance teams were requested on January 17th and January 19th respectively to assist with Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments. A total of four Public Assistance Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment Teams were deployed to Maine to assist state, county, and local partners in the assessment of \$70.3 million in estimated damages across a total of eight coastal counties (Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York). A total of two Individual Assistance Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment Teams were deployed to Maine to assist state, county, and local partners in the assessment of damages across the same eight coastal counties.

The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment for Individual Assistance was completed through site visits between January 29th and February 15th. The Individual Assistance Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment process had been scheduled to be completed in a one-week timeframe, however the declaration of DR-4754 on January 30, 2024, required the pulling of staff from the field to begin coordinating the deployment of Individual Assistance staff in support of Disaster Recovery Centers across five inland counties. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments did resume as soon as quick-turnaround logistical items associated with a new declaration were complete.

All coastal counties retained varying levels of damage to primary homes as represented in Enclosure A, which is inconveniently only a minute portrayal of the catastrophic damages obtained across all coastal communities. Primary homes were difficult to identify during the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments due to being interspersed among neighborhoods with mostly secondary homes and vacation rentals. In such situations, primary homes are often overlooked and assumed to be members of an affluent community. The true extent of damages to primary homes is, therefore, likely not accurately represented. At least two primary homeowners have been displaced as a result of the storm due to catastrophic damages, with dozens of others facing the need to sell multi-generational homes due to the extent of damage. The inequity associated with analysis only of primary homes along Maine's coastline in itself may result in further gentrification of the coast, likely negatively impacting Maine's marine and aquaculture sector and overall economy. Given that the Individual Assistance program will remain available only to affected primary homeowners, I am asking for the consideration of those individuals and families inherently in need of federal support.

The resulting cost estimate for the Individuals and Household Program from the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment is over \$1.8 million, which puts Maine in the 50% approval category. Given that affected homeowners are also having to recover from demolition of the waterfront infrastructure that inherently supports their livelihood, the Individual Assistance program is just one necessary component to the comprehensive recovery needs of disaster survivors spanning all eight coastal counties. With much of the marine and aquaculture field operating out of primary homes with private docks, hundreds of disaster survivors are now fighting to sustain generational family businesses with limited support. Maine produces 90% of the nation's lobster supply and is home to a thriving marine economy now at



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risk of decline. The recovery of Maine’s coastline will require the support of every federal resource available, and due to the compounded affects sustained by the coastal primary homeowners that help to sustain Maine’s economy, recovery is uncertain without the Individual Assistance program. Losing both personal property at home and work property at one time inevitably results in a drastic decrease in the likelihood that a disaster survivor will recover. The state of Maine is therefore requesting every available area within the Individual Assistance program to support the impacted individuals and families across all eight coastal counties.

The Total Taxable Resources for the State of Maine are \$82.4B. My administration has proposed the investment of \$50million to help communities rebuild infrastructure and enhance climate resiliency. The state of Maine is highly invested in the recovery and resilience coastal communities; however, Maine individuals and homeowners will still require the support of the Individual Assistance program as part of a more comprehensive effort given the magnitude and extent of the January 9th – 13th major coastal storms. The state also remains invested in the recovery efforts associated with six other disaster declarations received over the last 24 months, further limiting the fiscal and programmatic capacity of the state to support this most recent event. State Fiscal Capacity has undeniably deteriorated by all disaster events in the last 24 months, and focusing solely on State Fiscal capacity for this coastal event is in no way representative of the state's actual available resources.

Percentage of the population:	<i>for whom poverty status is determined</i>	<i>pre-disaster unemployment rate</i>	<i>65 years and older</i>	<i>with a disability under 65</i>	<i>who speak a language other than English at home</i>
Data Source	U.S. Census Bureau (2020)	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Dec. 2023)	U.S. Census Bureau (2020)	U.S. Census Bureau (2020)	U.S. Census Bureau (2020)
National Average	11.5%	3.7%	17.3%	8.9%	21.7%
State Average	10.8%	3.2%	22.6%	15.8%	6%
Cumberland County Average	6.6%	2.8%	20.6%	7.8%	7.3%
Hancock County Average	11%	4.3%	27%	8.4%	2.5%
Knox County Average	10.6%	3.6%	28.2%	9.2%	4.5%
Lincoln County Average	9.1%	3.6%	29.6%	10.6%	2.7%
Sagadahoc County Average	9.3%	2.7%	24.7%	6.3%	3.0%
Waldo County Average	13%	3.6%	25.2%	12.8%	4.8%
Washington County Average	15.6%	4.6%	26.3%	18%	5.4%
York County Average	8.5%	3.1%	22.4%	11%	5.7%



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While impacts were experienced along Maine's entire coastline, of particular note are the impacts to the communities experiencing higher poverty rates. Inland Washington County has been designated as a Community Disaster Resilience Zone designation, and quite clearly at large does not have the fiscal capacity to support the level of destruction obtained along the coastline. With Washington and Waldo County's poverty rate well above the national average, the "minor" damages could otherwise be construed as major in the eyes of the disaster survivor. The majority of Maine dwellings maintain most of the home's major appliances within the basement area, resulting in the complete simultaneous destruction of furnaces, hot water heaters, electrical panels, heating oil tanks and freezers. What might otherwise be construed as a minor damage in other states should feasibly be considered major given the prevalence of essential home equipment in a Maine basement dwelling. Structural issues, saltwater corrosion, mold remediation, and the removal of sand and seaweed from subfloor and wall infrastructure remain an issue for coastal residents and businesses.

The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment for Public Assistance was completed through site visits between January 23rd and January 26thth. The counties of Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York were confirmed as meeting FEMA requirements for Public Assistance, as represented in Enclosure B. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment results validated a total of \$5,233,710 in public infrastructure damages.

Validated damages from the event are currently broken down as follows; Category A (Debris Removal) was \$224,397 (4.29%); Category B (Protective Measures) was \$89,122 (1.70%); Category C (Roads and Bridges) was \$3,786,009 (72.34%); Category D (Water Control) was \$0 (0%); Category E (Buildings and Equipment) was \$208,143 (3.98%); Category F (Public Utilities) was \$0 (0%); and Category G (Parks and Other) \$926,039 (17.69%). Category D nor Category F were a focus in the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment; however, damages were sustained and will be represented should this event be declared.

Within the last 24 months, Maine has received a total of six disaster declarations and one emergency declaration. On March 15, 2022, DR-4647 was declared across three counties for a severe storm and flooding. On March 22, 2023, DR-4696 was declared across a total of six counties for another severe storm and flood event. On July 26, 2023, DR-4719 was declared across a total of eight counties for yet another severe storm and flood event. On September 5, 2023, DR-4736 was declared for Franklin County for a severe storm and flood event, and one day later on September 6, 2023, DR-4737 was declared for a severe storm and flood event in Oxford County. An Emergency Declaration, EM-3598-ME, was declared on September 14, 2023, in advance of Hurricane Lee. As recently as January 30, 2024, DR-4754 was declared for a severe storm and flood event spanning ten counties. With only sixteen counties in Maine, the majority of Maine counties are now struggling to balance disaster recovery efforts across multiple declared disaster events.

With the increased frequency and intensity of storm events in Maine over the last 24 months, emergency management officials across all levels of government remain stretched in their fiscal and programmatic capacity to respond to and recover from disasters. Supplemental grants through FEMA would enable all eight affected counties and the state of Maine to effectively build back after the highly devastating January coastal storm events.

It has been verified that all of the damaged infrastructure included in the validation process is not eligible for commercially available insurance coverage, and, therefore, all repair costs must be covered



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by local government taxpayers if Federal assistance is not obtained. Due to the extent of infrastructure damages combined with the amount of severe disaster events spanning the last 24 months, State resources are stretched and simply not adequate to meet the recovery needs of an event of this magnitude. At this time, the state of Maine and eight counties have successfully met their respective per capita thresholds, so I once again, humbly, request that a Major Disaster be declared due to the major storms occurring between January 9, 2024, and January 13, 2024.

I have designated Peter Rogers, Director, MEMA, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with FEMA and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Thank you for your continuing support of the state of Maine and our citizens.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills
Governor

Enclosures

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

Enclosure A: Supplemental Information for Individual Assistance

Enclosure B: Supplemental Information for Public Assistance

Enclosure C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

Additional Supporting Documentation: NWS Weather Event Report_01.09.2024-01.13.2024



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