



STATE OF INDIANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State House, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

**EXPEDITED REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION
MAJOR DISASTER**

April 6, 2023

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

Through: Thomas C. Sivak
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region V
536 S. Clark, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605-1521

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of 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 request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Indiana as a result of the destruction caused by severe weather, tornadoes, and flooding occurring on March 31, 2023, and continuing through the next day. Due to the unusual severity and magnitude of this weather event, this request is being made pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.36(d) and is requested to be expedited.

This letter (and its attachments) provide pertinent information about this disaster and its impact on the State of Indiana as well as actions taken by our State and other organizations.

On April 1, 2023, I took prompt and appropriate action under Indiana law and Section 401 of the Stafford Act by directing the execution of the State Emergency Operation Plan ("SEOP"). However, due to the severity and magnitude of this disaster, I have determined that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of our State and affected local governments, and supplementary federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the State of Indiana, local governments, disaster relief organizations, and compensation by insurance for disaster-related losses. If provided, I 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.

Lastly, due to the expedited nature of this request, additional information is still being collected to support this request and will be made available upon receipt.

Disaster Summary

Late in the evening of Friday, March 31, 2023, and continuing through the next day, a line of very strong and dangerous storms passed through Indiana resulting in at least twenty-five (25) confirmed tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and flooding which have caused death, injury, and severe damage throughout the State.

Before these storms made their way through Indiana, the National Weather Service's (NWS) Storm Prediction Center placed the majority of the State under a Moderate Risk (4/5) of severe weather. During the evening hours that Friday, rapid intensification and organizing of the storms occurred in Illinois, and they then continued moving eastward into Indiana. Widespread Tornado and Severe Thunderstorm Warnings were issued throughout the lifespan of the line of these storms. Through the night and into the early morning on Saturday, April 1, 2023, at least twenty-five (25) tornadoes touched down in Indiana. Of those, at least four (4) were classified as EF3, seven (7) were classified as EF2, and four (4) were classified as EF1. Attached hereto as "Exhibit 1" is a chart showing where these tornadoes impacted areas of our State.

That Saturday morning, I traveled to Sullivan County to see, firsthand, the impacts of the disaster and found devastation to a degree that our State has not experienced while I have been in office. Indeed, the twenty-five (25) tornadoes that touched down all around our State that evening, rank as the 4th largest tornadic outbreak in Indiana's recorded weather history. As a result of this, I made a finding, via executive order, that a state of emergency existed under Indiana law, and that immediate action was needed to fully and properly respond to this disastrous event.

The following is a list of emergency activations and declarations that have been made in response to this disaster:

1. In the early hours of April 1st, the SEOP was initiated, and the State Emergency Operations Center ("SEOC") was activated.
2. On April 1st, I issued Executive Order 23-02 declaring a disaster emergency in Johnson and Sullivan counties. See attached "Exhibit 2."
3. On April 1st, the following counties declared a local disaster emergency: Benton County, Johnson County, Monroe County, Morgan County, and Sullivan County.
4. On April 2nd, Owen County declared a local disaster emergency.
5. On April 3rd, the following counties declared a local disaster emergency: Greene County and White County.
6. On April 4th, after receiving additional reports and damage assessments, I issued Executive Order 23-03, which extended my disaster emergency declaration to five additional counties, as follows: Benton County, Monroe County, Morgan County, Owen County, and White County. See attached "Exhibit 3."

To date, a total of eight (8) counties have declared local disaster emergencies, seven (7) of which are included in the Executive Orders that I have issued declaring disaster emergencies within our State. And I anticipate issuing a third executive order covering additional counties.

Impact of Disaster

The impact of this disaster on the State of Indiana and affected local governments is severe and widespread. Although a full accounting has not yet been completed and is still underway, the following information provides a brief overview of some of the devastation that this disaster has wreaked on our State:

- Five (5) individuals died as a result of the storms and tornadoes.
- Thirty-four (34) people have suffered documented injuries.
- 165 structures were destroyed.
- 157 structures sustained major damage.
- Ninety-five (95) structures sustained minor damage.
- An additional 312 structures were adversely affected in some way.
- Power outages peaked at 106,914.
- Countless trees and utility poles were downed.
- Trailers, vehicles, and infrastructure were damaged.
- Local, state, and federal roads were made impassable.

Not only was the devastation brought on by this disaster severe and widespread, it also significantly impacted areas having among the lowest socio-economic status in our State. As shown by attached "Exhibit 4," "Exhibit 5," "Exhibit 6," "Exhibit 7," and "Exhibit 8," Sullivan County, which was hit by an EF3 tornado, sustained some of the worst damage and has somewhere between 40–80% of its population below 150% of the poverty level, unemployed, with no high school diploma or health insurance, and facing housing cost burdens. Additionally, the Emergency Management Director for Sullivan County has estimated that at least 40% of the homes impacted by that devastating tornado are uninsured or underinsured.

Outside of the statistics provided above, the impacts of this tragic event have taken a harsh and significant toll on the affected communities and the people living in them. For example, the destruction of cars has left many Hoosiers without transportation to work, school, essential medical appointments, grocery shopping, and to visit or stay with loved ones. Schools and churches have had to suspend their operations, businesses have been drastically impacted, and local government operations have been impeded to a significant degree. In Sullivan County alone, 200 vehicles have been damaged or destroyed, 5 businesses have been closed, and 70% of the residents have had to take time off work in order to try to somehow manage through or deal with this major disaster. And similar impacts have occurred in other areas, including the town of Whiteland, Indiana.

Due to the expedited nature of this request and the pause on assessments due to the severe weather that occurred on April 5, 2023, complete data still has not been obtained and the figures stated above are expected to increase. Joint state and federal assessments have been underway in four (4) of the hardest hit counties of our State; however, additional assessments still need to be completed in sixteen (16) additional counties where tornado damage has been reported.

State, Local, and Volunteer Actions

In response to the disaster, immediate State, local government, and volunteer organization efforts were undertaken. The following information details some of the actions and resources that

have been committed so far:

- In the early hours of April 1st, the SEOP was put into place and the SEOC was activated. Upon activation, SEOC began immediately directing resources in response to this disaster, with the goal of saving lives and preventing property damage.
- Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) provided overall direction and control, logistical support, planning, administration, and leadership in the SEOC.
- Over the course of the initial response, thirty (30) shelters were opened.
- Numerous search and rescue missions were undertaken by local emergency responders, the Indiana State Police, and others.
- Communications equipment was promptly deployed to establish and improve emergency communication by our Integrated Public Safety Commission, which included, among other things, the deployment of a MobileIntelliRepeater Site, Portable Cell Towers, radios, and antennas.
- Reunification centers were established.
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) deployed sawyer personnel to saw trees and wood, and clear debris.
- Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) evaluated road conditions and also activated maintenance operation crews for debris removal.
- Generators were provided in order to restore power for, among other things, a wastewater treatment plant lift station.
- Local, state, and federal roads were promptly cleared of debris or closed until hazards could be addressed.
- Disaster scene security was provided and implemented, and curfews were also established in certain jurisdictions.
- Utilities and infrastructure had to be turned off, repaired, and/or replaced.
- Damage assessments were initiated, and they were completed by the use of personnel from numerous state and local agencies as well as the utilization of unmanned aerial vehicles.
- “Indiana 211” has been utilized in order to receive damage reports.

- Public safety communications were issued.
- Family notifications for deceased victims were undertaken.
- Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority authorized emergency hotel assistance.
- “One Stop Shops” were arranged in or near affected areas in order to provide convenient locations for disaster survivors to begin their journey to recovery. These locations are designed to bring a variety of government and recovery services to a single location where survivors can efficiently have their questions answered and needs addressed.
- The Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (INVOAD) initiated sheltering, mobile feeding, disaster care, and other operations with at least ninety (90) staff and volunteers, four (4) emergency response vehicles, and one (1) mission response vehicle.

Overall, at least seven (7) key state agencies have been deployed to respond to this disaster, eight (8) local jurisdictions have formally declared local disaster emergencies, and a large number of volunteers have responded as well. They are doing the best they can to deal with and respond to this major disaster, which ranks as the 4th largest tornadic outbreak in Indiana’s recorded weather history.

Finally, on the very same day as this request is being prepared (April 5, 2023), our State is being hit by yet another round of strong and severe storms which have, so far, produced damage in at least ten (10) counties. Response and recovery efforts in the counties impacted by these new storms have necessitated, to a degree, the shifting of certain state and local resources to these newly impacted areas. Therefore, to continue an effective response to this disaster, supplementary federal assistance is needed.

Based upon the above information (including the attached exhibits), and on behalf of my fellow Hoosiers, I respectfully request that you give your fullest consideration to my request and provide your reply as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

Enclosures:

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form

Exhibit 1: Tornado Chart

Exhibits 2 & 3: Executive Orders

Exhibits 4–8: CDC 2020 SVI Forms w. Tornado Paths