



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II  
LT. GOVERNOR

***VIA EMAIL***

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Through: Mr. James K. Joseph, Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region V  
536 South Clark Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60605

Dear Mr. President,

Over the past two days a major rainfall event in mid-Michigan led to the failure of two dams and severe flooding in affected areas. Thousands of people were forced to evacuate as water surged into their streets, homes, and businesses in the county of Midland. Under the provisions of Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5191 (Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.35, I request that you declare, on an expedited basis, an emergency for the State of Michigan as a result of this event.

Beginning on May 16, 2020, a storm system moved through the State of Michigan, resulting in six to eight inches of rain over a 48-hour period. In response to the rainfall and localized flooding, the counties of Gladwin and Midland declared local States of Emergency on May 18, 2020, followed by the counties of Saginaw and Arenac on May 19, 2020. Due to the heavy rainfall, the Edenville Dam and subsequently the Sanford Dam were breached on May 19, 2020, which required over 10,000 Midland County residents to evacuate their homes due to the imminent danger from this 500-year flood event. Although the rainfall has subsided, the impact from the storm system continued as the Tittabawassee River in Midland County crested at 35 feet at 5:45 p.m. on May 20, 2020, four days after the initial onset of rainfall.

In response to these conditions, eight shelters opened to house displaced residents, along with hotels and other locations. As the incident is still evolving, there is potential that sheltering operations will increase due to the severity of the damage. Residents and businesses are impacted drastically through damage to their property. While on-ground damage assessments could not be completed yet, due to the flooding conditions, Midland County’s 2018 FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan estimates building impacts from a failure of the Edenville Dam to 5,745 parcels with a total building value of \$878,974,848.

The following table provides a socio-economic profile of Midland County. The county has a higher percentage of elderly residents than either the State of Michigan or the United States as a whole, and a higher percentage of persons with disabilities than the United States. Its percentage of unemployed residents was slightly higher than that of the United States at the time of this census data, and the current COVID-19 pandemic has caused the shutdown of the most important employer in the county—Dow Chemical. As Michigan has been hit harder than most states by the impacts of COVID-19, the additional economic and employment impacts of this incident are extremely severe. These socio-economic factors will complicate incident response and recovery.

	Population	Age 65+	Unemployed	Persons with a Disability
<b>U.S.</b>	316,515,021	14.1%	8.3%	12.4%
<b>Michigan</b>	9,900,571	15.0%	9.8%	14.1%
<b>Midland</b>	83,624	15.8%	8.5%	13.3%

Source: American Factfinder, U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; DP02, DP-03, DP05.

The flooding also impacted several roadways in the disaster area including Eastbound (EB) and westbound (WB) M-20 between Main St. and Meridian Rd., EB & WB US-10 between M-30 and US-127, and M-30 between Saginaw Road and M-20. Closures of local roadways have increased emergency vehicle response times and have decreased the accessibility of the disaster area for response personnel and equipment.

I took appropriate action under state law in response to this flood emergency and directed the execution of the Michigan Emergency Management Plan on May 19, 2020. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was staffed with Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) employees and State Emergency Management Coordinators (SEMCs) from multiple agencies and partner organizations. On the same date, under my authority as Governor, I also declared a state of emergency for the county of Midland including the local political subdivisions located therein, and directed state departments and agencies to utilize all available resources necessary to assist the aforementioned counties and local political subdivisions in responding to and recovering from this disaster.

Beginning on May 18, 2020, the affected counties and jurisdictions within the counties have taken several actions to cope with the situation, including but not limited to: declaring local states of emergency; activating the disaster response and recovery aspects of their emergency operations plans; issuing emergency public information; evacuating and providing shelter to affected residents; and closing affected roadways. Local emergency operations centers (EOCs) in the impacted areas were staffed and coordinated requests for

critical assistance. State assistance was requested when local resources were exhausted. In addition, the affected local emergency management agencies provided consistent situational awareness to the SEOC through conference calls, emails, and the Michigan Critical Information Management System (MICIMS).

Voluntary organizations are working together with state and local officials to assist in response and recovery. Volunteer efforts will support food distribution, personal protection equipment (PPE) distribution, managing sheltering needs, mucking and cleaning out homes, identifying unmet needs of residents, and long-term recovery efforts.

Numerous state departments and agencies had already initiated response actions in the counties of Arenac, Gladwin, Saginaw and Midland prior to my formal proclamation, in accordance with their assigned missions in the Michigan Emergency Management Plan. These actions included but were not limited to: providing direct assistance to the affected communities and to individuals; ensuring the safety of residents and rescuing individuals trapped by water in otherwise inaccessible locations; assessing the damage and impacts to affected state facilities, infrastructure, and services under their stewardship; and taking appropriate actions to keep those affected facilities, infrastructure, and services operational.

The State of Michigan continues to provide a variety of critical resources to local jurisdictions. The Department of Technology, Management and Budget is supplementing local communications capabilities by operating radio event channels, and by providing radios and tablets. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan State Police (MSP), and Michigan National Guard (MING) are providing dive teams, watercraft and specialty high water vehicles in support of search and rescue operations. Personnel from the MING and MSP are assisting with evacuation efforts, and the MSP is also supporting traffic control. Technical specialists from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) are monitoring dam conditions. MDNR is assisting local EOCs with incident management support personnel. The MING 51st Civil Support Team is standing by to assist in case hazardous materials facilities require protection, and a MING UH60 helicopter with a hoist bucket is available to support search and rescue.

Additional state assistance requested by local jurisdictions is being processed. This includes high water cargo vehicles for the transportation of heavy equipment and supplies for protecting disaster survivors and displaced residents in shelters from COVID-19 (such as PPE, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer).

Despite our efforts, local and state resources have been insufficient to respond to the situation. The availability of equipment and personnel is further limited due to the ongoing effects and response requirements of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Therefore, additional federal assistance is required to protect public health, safety, and property, and to lessen or avert the threat of more severe and persisting impacts to the community. Examples of federal resources that might be needed may include mobile bridges (to ensure access for emergency response vehicles and equipment to flooded areas) and emergency medical responders from the National Guard, and technical assistance and sandbags from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Therefore, I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State of Michigan and the affected local governments and supplemental federal relief assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting activation of Category A (debris removal) and Category B (emergency protective measures), including direct federal assistance, under FEMA's public assistance program. The management of debris will be critically important to recovery in the days immediately following this flood disaster.

Extensive and rapid debris operations (Category A) are required to clear and remove flood-damaged building materials and personal property from curbsides and roadway rights-of-way in residential and commercial areas in order to protect public health and safety and enable the continuing use of adjacent roadways, sidewalks, and fire hydrants. The wet, heavy, contaminated flood debris from damaged homes and businesses will create dangerous and unsanitary conditions in the affected areas.

Expedient access to the resources for emergency protective measures (Category B) will be critical for this incident. Evacuation and sheltering were an immediate need and will continue to be a critical resource for protecting life. The ability to provide life sustaining supplies and commodities will also be critical for meeting the needs of the many people impacted by this incident.

I certify that for this emergency, the state and local governments will assume applicable non-federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act, and have designated Capt. Kevin Sweeney of the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on recovery program implementation and may provide further information or justification on my behalf. Earlier today, I also requested FEMA to participate in a joint federal, state, and local Preliminary Damage Assessment of the disaster area in preparation of a potential later request for declaration of a major disaster and additional public and individual assistance programs.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor