



MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO



**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

June 3, 2024

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

Through: Thomas Sivak, Regional Administrator
FEMA Region V
Chicago, Illinois 60605

Dear President Biden,

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 request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Ohio as a result of flooding, landslides, severe storms, and tornadoes from April 1-4, 2024.

This widespread system of storms impacted underserved Appalachian communities that are now in need of supplemental federal assistance. Prior to the FEMA/State/Local Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (Joint PDA), local damage assessments totaled \$50.5 million. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, FEMA provided the State with verified damage totaling \$17.4 million -- a reduction of over \$33 million. Subsequently, the State reviewed the documentation in its possession from the Joint PDA to identify where and why reductions FEMA made reductions.

The State concurs with a reduction of \$16.6 million, however, it is the State's position that damages have been verified totaling \$33.8 million. Ohio EMA disputes the remaining \$16.4 million reduction in eligible damages validated by FEMA because FEMA relied on Google Earth images instead of obtaining additional documentation from the applicants through the Request for Information (RFI) process. FEMA's validation causes the resulting storm damage to fall just \$4.2 million short of the federal threshold.

Furthermore, it is the State's position that other factors support a major disaster declaration for this system of severe storms. The greatest impact from this incident is the damage to critical infrastructure in multiple counties, such as roads and culverts. There are reports of hundreds of road washouts, whether a result of lost road materials or embankment failures.

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These are rural counties within the Appalachian Region with low county populations. Low populations result in low tax revenue for county engineer offices and townships. Funding daily operations is a challenge and making the expensive repairs that result from this incident with their own budgets is not feasible.

The State undertook efforts for hazard mitigation. In preparation for the Major Flood Stage crests along the Ohio River, individuals, businesses, and local governments took efforts to mitigate losses by relocating items from first floors and evacuating low-lying areas. Finally, the State has suffered multiple disasters over the last 24 months, authorizing an estimated \$28 million for eight events.

Action under State Law and Implementation of State Emergency Operations Plan

Beginning on April 1, 2024, a widespread system with heavy rains, severe storms, and tornadoes impacted counties within Ohio. Following the State's Emergency Operations Plan, the State Emergency Operations Center issued the first Spot Report on April 2, 2024, noting 25,036 statewide power outages, major structural damage in Lawrence County, and the opening of a portion of Franklin County's floodwall. During this time, the National Weather Service issued tornado watches in Lawrence and Gallia counties and several flood watches and warnings across the State.

By late afternoon on April 2, a Flash Flood Warning was issued for the following counties: Columbiana, Monroe, Tuscarawas, Jefferson, Harrison, Noble, Belmont, Guernsey, Carroll, Coshocton, and Muskingum. Later that evening, a Tornado Watch was also issued for Pike, Madison, Highland, Fayette, Clark, Warren, Miami, Ross, Scioto, Franklin, Hamilton, Clinton, Greene, Adams, Brown, Clermont, Montgomery, Preble, Butler, and Pickaway counties. By April 3, the severe weather system had exited the State.

The impacts from this system included voluntary evacuations in Licking County, at Canterbury Trails Park in Newark, due to rising water levels on the South Fork Licking River. The American Red Cross mobilized resources to establish a shelter in Newark to accommodate approximately 40 displaced residents. The Cedar Hill Nursing Home in Zanesville experienced flooding that resulted in the relocation of at least three residents to a different area within the facility.

Many area rivers and streams around the State exceeded or were expected to exceed their flood stage. There was also widespread areal flooding. Wills Creek at Cambridge (Guernsey County) reached Major Flood Stage at 20.27 feet. As of early morning on April 5, the Ohio River at the Marietta Pumphouse (Washington County) reached Major flood stage.

In preparation for the Major Flood Stage crests along the Ohio River, individuals, businesses and local governments took efforts to mitigate losses by relocating items from first floors and evacuating low-lying areas. Widespread road closures impacted eastern and southeastern Ohio. There was one reported fatality in Guernsey County, from a vehicle driving into flood waters, and one injury reported from the tornado in Adams County. In total, eight tornadoes were confirmed by the National Weather Service (NWS).

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Preliminary Damage Assessment Findings

On April 22, 2024, the Executive Director of Ohio EMA requested a Joint PDA for Public Assistance. During the week of April 29, 2024, this Joint PDA was completed in the following counties: Belmont, Monroe, Guernsey, Noble, Washington, Meigs, Morgan, Muskingum, Tuscarawas, and Jefferson. These Joint PDAs included meetings with local officials to review paperwork and photos of the damages and site inspections of significantly damaged locations.

The FEMA members of the Joint PDA Teams consisted of staff from the Region V Appeals Section, engineers, the Field Operations Section Lead, the Public Assistance Branch Chief, and the Recovery Division Director. The areas of most widespread damage were in Monroe and Belmont counties. One Team was assigned to each of those counties for a multiple day period to ensure enough time to meet with local officials, review documentation, conduct site inspections, and address requests for information (RFIs).

Prior to the Joint PDA local damage assessments totaled \$50.5 million. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, FEMA provided the State with the table included in Enclosure B. The table demonstrates that FEMA verified damage totaling \$17.4 million -- a reduction of over \$33 million. Subsequently, the State reviewed the documentation in its possession (sourced from both local officials and FEMA) from the Joint PDA in order to identify where and why reductions were made by FEMA. The State concurs with a reduction of \$16.6 million, which includes damage to ineligible facilities, pre-disaster damage, corrections in estimated costs, and ineligible work.

To arrive at the remaining \$16.4 million in reductions, FEMA used Google Earth images and typically only used one indicator to evaluate site instability. Had FEMA used RFIs and multiple indicators to evaluate site instability, it would have validated more of the damage. I am providing two examples where FEMA determined pre-existing damage using only the Google Earth images, rather than the standard practice of an RFI. This resulted in a reduction of \$740,000.00 (see Additional Supporting Documentation in OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13).

Further, the State and FEMA have a shared goal in ensuring equity when providing disaster assistance. In addition to the per capita indicator, FEMA considers the impacts of a disaster, such as the location and population. In this instance, the impacted counties are underserved Appalachian communities with little tax revenue to make major repairs. I am asking for this Declaration not only because I think the per capita indicators have been met, but because Federal Assistance in these counties helps both the State and federal governments move toward our goal of achieving equity in disaster response and recovery.

Summary of Impacts

The greatest impact from this incident is the damage to critical infrastructure in multiple counties, such as roads and culverts. There are reports of hundreds of road washouts, whether a result of lost road materials or embankment failures. The geography of southern and eastern Ohio is prime for embankment failures when the ground is saturated with water. These embankment failures result in road closures, extensive detours, and dangerous traveling conditions for school buses, emergency vehicles, and the public.

These are rural counties within the Appalachian Region with low county populations. Low populations result in low tax revenue for county engineer offices and townships. Funding daily operations is a challenge and making the expensive repairs that result from this incident with their own budgets is not feasible. Without supplemental federal financial assistance, these repairs may go uncompleted for great lengths of time, resulting in worsening damage, as local officials attempt to compete for limited funds elsewhere to assist with recovery.

Recent Disaster History

Ohio EMA is providing a cost share for the Other Needs Assistance Program for DR-4777, estimated at \$500,000. Additionally, the Ohio EMA has a state funded infrastructure program called the State Disaster Relief Program. First implemented in 1985, this Program has provided \$88.9 million in grants to local governments for 94 incidents (average 2.4 incidents per year, average of \$2.2 million per year). This program is utilized when federal assistance is not available and is cost-shared 75%/25% between the state and local governments. During the past 24 months, this program was authorized for the following events, estimated at \$28,062,739:

- June 2022 Severe Storms -- \$10,228,084.52
- July 2022 Tornadoes -- \$6,397,413.96
- Jan 2023 Flooding -- \$1,154,895.05
- March/April 2023 Tornadoes -- \$1,591,534.98
- January 2024 Flooding -- \$5,500,000.00
- March 14, 2024 Tornadoes -- \$1,857,478.92
- Eclipse 2024 -- \$537,814.39

Public Assistance Impacts

Preliminary damage assessment numbers from the FEMA Joint PDA visit are outlined below:

Debris Removal	\$967,046	Percent of total 5.54%
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The high dollar debris removal costs for this incident are a result of uphill slides depositing large amounts of vegetative and silt onto roadways. These slides temporarily have closed roads until the debris can be removed. Additionally, culverts needed to be cleaned out and woody debris needed to be removed from local roadways.

Emergency Protective Measures	\$953,898	Percent of total 5.46%
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One particular item to note for emergency protective measures is the work performed in the Village of Powhatan Point, Belmont County, to address emergency repairs at their wastewater treatment plant and disinfecting of wells. There are also costs associated with emergency stabilization work or to address washouts around waterways.

Roads and Bridges **\$14,547,665** **Percent of total 83.29%**

Across all eight counties, the damage to infrastructure is significant. There are hundreds of embankment failures that require substantial repairs, including H-pile walls, drill shaft walls, etc. One Township has three landslides on one road, totaling 375 feet and estimated at \$562,000.00. This Township's annual budget is \$1.9 million with a road budget of \$585,00.00. This effect on local budgets only compounds the impacts of this incident.

Buildings **\$135,391** **Percent of total 1.78%**

Impacts to buildings are along the Ohio River, and damages were due to the major crests. A school district's athletic field was damaged, and a village had damages to their park buildings.

Utilities **\$826,648** **Percent of total 4.73%**

In the City of Steubenville (Jefferson County), a landslide is impacting a city water line, which also lies right behind a home. The cost for this work makes up 75% of the costs in this category.

Parks and Recreation **\$35,966** **Percent of total 0.21%**

At the time of the Joint PDA, the only identified damage in this category was the community park in the Village of Rayland, Jefferson County. There is no insurance coverage for any of the damage identified during the Joint PDA.

For the reasons outlined above, this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local governments. Supplementary federal assistance is necessary.

There is a variance between the damage assessment by the local officials and the one by FEMA. A significant portion of the damage assessment reductions made by FEMA were based upon Google Earth images with no opportunity for the local officials to provide additional information to validate the damages. In addition, the greatest impact is damage to critical infrastructure in low tax revenue areas, making the expensive repairs needed with their own budgets not feasible.

The State undertook hazard mitigation and has suffered multiple disasters in the months preceding this event totaling an estimated \$28 million. I am specifically requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for the Public Assistance Program, all categories, for the following counties: Belmont, Monroe, Washington, Morgan, Meigs, Noble, Guernsey, and Jefferson counties. I am also requesting the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program statewide. Thank you.

Very respectfully yours,



Mike DeWine
Governor

Enclosures

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

B: Public Assistance

C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

Additional Supporting Documentation: Examples from the Joint PDA

ENCLOSURE B TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance

FEMA Region 5 - Ohio
PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT for Severe Storms, Flooding 4/1/2024 to 4/4/2024

		Cat A Debris	Cat B Emergency	Cat C Roads	Cat D Water	Cat E Buildings	Cat F Utilities	Cat G Other	Total	State Pop	Cost per Capita	Total Counties
All Counties	GRAND TOTAL:	\$ 1,025,974	\$ 993,133	\$ 14,852,312	\$ -	\$ 135,391	\$ 826,648	\$ 44,117	\$ 17,877,576	11,799,448	\$ 1.51	10
	PERCENTAGE:	5.74%	5.56%	83.08%	0.00%	0.76%	4.62%	0.25%	County Per Capita Min: \$1.52 Max: \$204.86			
Counties that meet threshold	GRAND TOTAL:	\$ 287,204	\$ 234,298	\$ 3,141,865	\$ -	\$ 145,431	\$ 816,648	\$ 35,399	\$ 12,466,311	11,799,448	\$ 1.05	8
	PERCENTAGE:	5.54%	5.46%	83.29%	0.00%	0.78%	4.73%	0.21%	County Per Capita Min: \$7.57 Max: \$204.86			

County	Subrecipient	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C	Cat D	Cat E	Cat F	Cat G	Subtotal	County Pop.	Cost per Capita	% of Eligible	Applicants Pending
Belmont		\$ 555,337	\$ 207,040	\$ 6,091,707	\$ -	\$ 92,391	\$ 48,869	\$ -	\$ 6,995,344	66,497	\$ 105.20	40.05%	0
Guernsey		\$ -	\$ 32,195	\$ 887,941	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 920,136	38,438	\$ 23.94	5.27%	0
Jefferson		\$ 132,286	\$ 318,900	\$ 625,337	\$ -	\$ 43,000	\$ 574,250	\$ 35,966	\$ 1,729,339	65,249	\$ 26.50	9.90%	0
Meigs		\$ 53,501	\$ -	\$ 114,622	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 168,122	22,210	\$ 7.57	0.96%	0
Monroe		\$ 77,027	\$ 396,162	\$ 2,268,800	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,741,990	13,385	\$ 204.86	15.70%	0
Morgan		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,003,154	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,003,154	13,802	\$ 72.68	5.74%	0
Muskingum		\$ 11,300	\$ 34,916	\$ 148,181	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 194,417	95,310	\$ 2.04	0.26%	0
Noble		\$ 8,929	\$ -	\$ 2,223,871	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,232,801	14,115	\$ 158.19	12.78%	0
Putnam		\$ 47,619	\$ 5,200	\$ 155,485	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 208,304	35,004	\$ 5.95	0.74%	0
Washington		\$ 135,965	\$ -	\$ 1,332,232	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 203,530	\$ -	\$ 1,675,728	59,771	\$ 28.04	9.59%	0
(blank)	(blank)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#N/A	\$ -	0.00%	0
Grand Total		\$ 1,025,974	\$ 993,133	\$ 14,852,312	\$ -	\$ 135,391	\$ 826,648	\$ 44,117	\$ 17,877,576	11,799,448	\$ 1.51		0

ENCLOSURE C TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

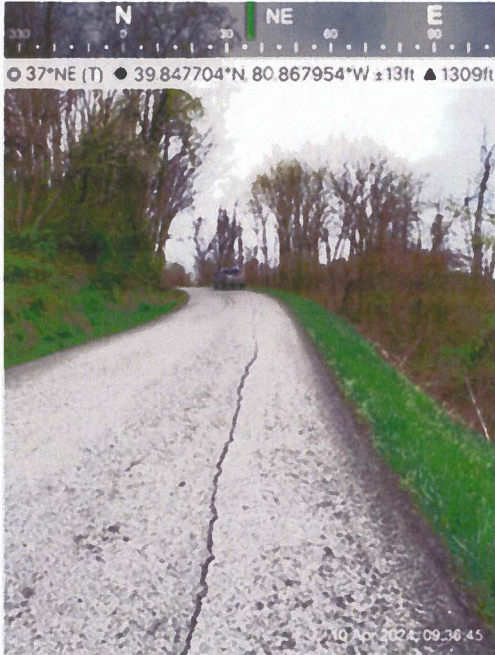
Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs

Count y/ Tribal Area	SBA Home Loans	SBA Business Loans	FSA Loans	NRC S	FHWA	USAC E	BIA	OTHER
<i>All</i>				<i>\$2M</i>	<i>\$20M</i>			
Totals				<i>\$2M</i>	<i>\$20M</i>			

Note: Provide numbers and amounts, as appropriate.

Additional Supporting Documentation - Examples from Joint PDA

Example 1



Site inspection conducted but was not shared with the state. FEMA believes the same damage presented by the local officials on the left (Monroe County Engineer CR 25-2.91). Is also visible in the Google Earth image above. No RFI was issued and this decision resulted in a \$500,000 reduction.

Example 2



No site inspection performed. FEMA believes the same damage presented by the local officials on the left (Monroe County Engineer CR30-0.05) is visible in both Google Earth "Street view" (above) and the same patching is in the aerial Google Earth image on the right. No RFI was issued and this decision resulted in a reduction of \$240,000.