



**Eric Johnson**  
Mayor

June 3, 2020

The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sent via email: [jacob\\_smith@cornyn.senate.gov](mailto:jacob_smith@cornyn.senate.gov)

Dear Senator Cornyn:

Thank you for your help as we seek a Major Disaster Declaration in response to the October 20, 2019, tornadoes that struck North Texas. I appreciate all that you and your staff have done to help the City of Dallas recover from this traumatic event.

Unfortunately, we have reached an impasse with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As its officials assess whether damage from the tornadoes meets the financial threshold for a Major Disaster Declaration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is asking the Dallas Independent School District to provide additional documentation, specifically:

- An interim insurance report which identifies what insurance will/intends to cover;
- A breakdown of Edward H. Cary Middle School costs covered by insurance; and
- Calculations of the cost of Americans with Disabilities Act requirements as Dallas Independent School District property is rebuilt.

Simply put, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is asking for the impossible. The Dallas Independent School District cannot meet these requests because its insurance provider is not obligated to produce that information and will not do so until it is closer to settling the final claim. Regarding the third request, Dallas Independent School District design architects are a long way from finalizing detailed design elements including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As such, we are once again requesting your help. A Federal Emergency Management Agency decision on our request for a Major Disaster Declaration is due later this month. We simply do not have the time to engage in a bureaucratic negotiation and fruitless exchanges of paperwork.

I am afraid that we are close to concluding that the Federal Emergency Management Agency does not want to help Dallas rebuild. Even if the Dallas Independent School District was somehow able to produce the requested documentation, I am concerned that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will draw on its copious rules and regulations to erect yet another obstacle and run out the clock on our request for Public Assistance.



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To review this issue:

- The October 20, 2019 tornadoes that struck North Texas inflicted considerable damage across 16 Texas counties.
- The most severe damage was caused by an EF-3 tornado that touched down in a densely populated portion of North Dallas.
- The Insurance Council of Texas estimates that total damages from the tornadoes totaled \$2 billion, making them the costliest tornadoes in Texas history.
- The City of Dallas, the State of Texas, and other public entities worked closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VI in Denton to determine the full extent of covered and uncovered costs.
- The City of Dallas emergency management team estimates that all uninsured damage estimates meet or exceed the statewide threshold of \$38.5 million needed to declare a Major Disaster.
- However, the Federal Emergency Management Agency did not take into account \$66 million in damage to three Dallas Independent School District schools when it rejected our initial request for Public Assistance.
- As outlined above, Dallas Independent School District has been working with its insurance adjusters to obtain final costs for its damages but cannot meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency's stringent requirements at this time.
- We do not believe any impartial observer would question whether damages from the tornadoes meets the threshold for a Major Disaster Declaration.

Amid both the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest across the country, I appreciate anything that you can do to overcome this impasse and secure a Major Disaster Declaration to help us rebuild.

Thank you for the time and attention to this issue, and thank you again for all of your assistance thus far.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Johnson", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric Johnson  
Mayor