



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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June 14, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D. C. 20502-0001

Through: Robert Samaam
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region IV
3005 Chamblee Tucker Road
Atlanta, GA 30341

Re: Request for Major Disaster Declaration

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), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the Commonwealth of Kentucky in response to a severe weather event that power outages, damages to public and private properties, significant quantities of debris, and multiple deaths and injuries. The system began May 21, 2024, and finally concluded in the early hours of May 27, 2024. The system spawned a total of 16 destructive tornadoes and damaging straight-line winds.

States of Emergency

In response to the severity of this event, I declared a State of Emergency in Executive Order 2024-379, effective May 26, 2024. On the same day I issued another Executive Order declaring a State of Emergency to prohibited price gouging. Executive Order 2024-379 activated the State Emergency Operation Center and the State Emergency Operations Plan.

The event impacted 57 of Kentucky's 120 counties. Thirty of those counties and 24 cities experienced such damage severity that local states of emergency were declared. (See Attachment 1).

The following listing details the 16 tornadoes that traversed the state. Also, multiple areas were impacted by straight-line winds.

Weather Data

Tornadic Activity	Impacted Counties	Wind Speed	Straight-Line Winds	Impacted Counties	Wind Speed
EF-3	Lyon, Caldwell, Hopkins	160		Barren	100
EF-2	Trigg, Christian	115		Graves	unknown
EF-1	Barren	110		Grayson	85
	Calloway	105		Logan	75
	Clinton	95		Mercer, Garrard	85
	Clinton	105		Muhlenberg	unknown
	Cumberland,	90		Simpson	85
	Cumberland, Clinton	95		Woodford	80
	Graves	100			
	Meade	90			
	Monroe, Metcalfe, Cumberland	110			
	Muhlenberg, Butler, Warren	110			
	Muhlenberg, McLean	90			
	Trigg	95			
	Whitley	90			
EF-0	Union	75			

The Commonwealth engaged the services of a meteorologist, with a decades-long history of forecasting and examining Kentucky weather while employed with the Louisville National Weather Service Office, to perform an analysis of the event. His inspection details the event and associated tornadic activities. (See Attachment 2).

Injuries/Fatalities

Although western Kentucky was the most impacted area, the event created dangerous conditions and damages traversing to the state’s easternmost border. Tragically, six Kentuckians lost their lives because of this event. Four of the six people were killed by trees that fell because

of tornadic and wind shear conditions. One person suffered a heart attack while attempting to remove a tree from his home. The victims are from the counties of Caldwell, Hardin, Hopkins, Jefferson, and Mercer, and ranged from 34 to 67 years in age. Additionally, a 99-year-old female died from injuries sustained in a car accident in Laurel County during a severe storm on May 26.

Numerous impacted counties reported storm-related injuries, most of which were caused by falling vegetative debris.

Event Impact

Notably, the area most impacted by this event is the same area ravaged by tornadoes on December 10, 2021. The 2021 event destroyed thousands of homes, businesses, and other structures, and took the lives of 44 Kentuckians. Long-term recovery efforts are ongoing to this day. Some of the homes destroyed by this May 2024 event were newly constructed to replace homes lost in the 2021 event. (See Attachment 3).

Utilities: Fifteen electric cooperatives and numerous municipal utilities that experienced damages due to the storms. Power outages associated with the event peaked at over 213,000 households. Power was not restored for several weeks in many areas. While the Louisville/Jefferson County area did not meet its damage threshold, the area did sustain significant damage from straight-line winds. The disruption to power the metropolitan area was widespread with many households waiting three and four days for restoration.

Seven hospitals and four long-term care facilities were on emergency generator power for multiple days. (See Attachment 4).

Communications: Multiple cellular phone communication providers were significantly impacted. Forty-three (43) counties experienced disruptions lasting from several hours to several days. There is also a telephone cooperative that sustained storm-related damages.

A serious communications issue arose when the Kentucky State Police (KSP) lost 911 telephone connectivity at 14 of the 16 KSP posts which are located across the Commonwealth. Outages lasted anywhere from 12 to 20 hours. During this time KSP systems rolled over to KSP administrative landlines or to surrounding public-safety answering points.

Hazardous Materials: The event caused hazardous chemical spills in two counties. Crude oil was spilled from a storage tank in Hopkins County. In Clinton County, a marina was pushed from its moorings, creating a significant spill of marine fuel on Dale Hollow Lake.

Debris: Significant damage and emergency protective measures costs were incurred because of this event. In addition to utility damage, the next most costly consequence of the event is attributable to the massive amount of debris generated by the storms. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments for the Public Assistance Program, conducted by KYEM, local governments, cooperative representatives, and FEMA reflect that the state's damage threshold of \$8,290,738.24 was achieved with final assessments of currently identified damages in excess of \$27,1240,000.

State Response Efforts

The state and local emergency operations centers were activated in response to the event. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) worked to monitor state and federal emergency routes. Across Kentucky there were hundreds of local, state, and federal routes that were closed due to massive amounts of debris and downed power poles and utility lines. Even a major multilane parkway in western Kentucky was closed because of debris and downed powerlines. Both state and local road crews barricaded roads that were dangerous and impassable.

The Kentucky Division of Emergency Management deployed additional Area Managers into the hardest hit counties. They assisted local emergency management directors with response and recovery efforts.

Search and rescue teams were deployed by the State Emergency Operations Center to Hopkins and Muhlenberg counties where tornadoes collapsed and destroyed many residences. Four ambulance teams were also deployed to these counties.

Twelve saw teams were deployed by the State Emergency Operations Center – six from the National Guard and six from the Kentucky Division of Forestry. Their work was focused in the four most-impacted counties: Christian, Hopkins, Muhlenberg, and Woodford.

The Commonwealth delivered pallets of drinking water for distribution in Muhlenberg and Clinton counties.

There were five drinking water and three wastewater systems forced to use generators to maintain customer service. One drinking water system issued a boil water advisory as low pressure compromised water safety. In response, the Commonwealth supplied three generators and diesel fuel to systems in danger of not being able to service customers.

In Hopkins and Barren counties, the Commonwealth opened the Pennyryle and Barren River State Resort Parks for sheltering of displaced survivors.

Local Response Efforts

County Emergency Operations Centers activated across the state in preparation for and response to the severe storms and tornadoes. Local emergency management directors coordinated response efforts, prioritizing the saving and protecting of lives. In the hardest-hit counties, the first order of business was to initiate search and rescue missions. Door-to-door wellness checks were conducted and, where necessary, survivors were transported to safe areas.

County road departments partnered with electric providers to barricade unsafe roadways caused by debris, broken power poles, and downed powerlines. The departments used heavy equipment to push and shove debris off emergency routes, making clearance for emergency vehicles and first responders. Where needed, road detours were established, some remaining to this day.

Drones were flown along tornado paths to quickly identify destruction areas, thereby ensuring the proper deployment response resources. In several counties, fire departments and local law enforcement personnel secured impacted areas from looters.

Where warranted, temporary shelters were established.

Volunteer Response Efforts

The Kentucky Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) closely monitored the event and various organizations were deployed into impacted areas, conducting damage assessments, tarping hundreds of roofs, removing debris, donating heavy equipment, distributing food, and conducting feeding operations. As of the date of this request, over 5,000 hours of efforts have been provided by more than 400 volunteers. VOAD efforts are ongoing.

Examples of the efforts of volunteer organizations:

The **Kentucky Homeland Heroes Disaster Relief Mission** concentrated its efforts in Muhlenberg County where it tarped roofs, managed and distributed donations, and removed trees off residences.

Team Rubicon returned to Kentucky to help the town of Powderly in Muhlenberg County. The team activated three saw teams to clear trees and other debris from residences. Rubicon also tarped roofs. Future plans include a Rubicon deployment to Hopkins County.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief was active in Hopkins, Muhlenberg, Graves, and McLean counties. Work was accomplished by chainsaw crews, heavy equipment operators, and crews tarping roofs. Most of the work was concentrated in the cities of Mayfield and Dawson Springs which were the two hardest hit cities in the December 2021, (DR-4630) tornado event.

The Southeast Conservation Corps concentrated its efforts in Mayfield and Graves County where chainsaw volunteer crews cleared debris and removed trees from residences. Another deployment is scheduled by the Corps for early July.

The Hopkins County Long-term Recovery Group was organized in response to the December 2021 tornado event (DR-4630). The group quickly mobilized, opening a volunteer command center in Dawson Springs, in response to the new event. Over 300 citizens volunteered their time on chainsaw and debris crews, making deliveries of donations, running feeding operations, and tarping roofs.

The American Red Cross conducted damage assessments for more than 300 residences. Two temporary shelters were opened. ARC provided 655 meals and 2,526 snacks. ARC has opened 49 cases, servicing 136 impacted citizens. The Red Cross also sheltered six residents who were displaced after a massive tree fell on their apartment complex. Other tenants housed with family and friends.

Volunteer Fire Departments assisted in almost every impacted county. Several hundred volunteer firemen conducted search and rescue missions, transported survivors, and helped to clear debris from roadways.

Again, volunteer efforts are ongoing.

History of Disasters

The frequency of disasters in Kentucky is unrelenting. Routinely, every region of the Commonwealth is faced with the challenges associated with disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Both state and local governments and especially citizens are constantly dealing with the fiscal realities of disasters as destruction continues to occur

Recent Kentucky Disaster History

DR	Event Type	Number of Counties	Incident Start Date	Estimated Disaster Value	Number of Applicants	Number of Damages Claimed
4711	Severe Storms	22	2/15/23	\$15,000,000	39	632
4702	Severe Storms	88	3/3/23	\$55,000,000	115	533
4663	Flooding	20	7/26/2022	\$602,699,412	129	8,338
4643	Flooding	13	12/31/2021	\$24,320,916	24	601
4630	Tornado	17	12/10/2021	\$313,292,709	105	873
4595	Flooding	49	2/27/2021	\$164,410,251	84	3,276
4592	Winter Storm	45	2/8/2021	\$68,894,917	68	361
4540	Flooding	27	2/3/2020	\$81,574,096	47	1,155
4497	COVID	120	1/20/2020	\$459,254,935	515	171
4428	Flooding	60	2/6/2019	\$110,905,411	100	2,526
4361	Flooding	35	2/21/2018	\$38,440,001	67	1,125
4358	Flooding	22	2/9/2018	\$38,913,750	43	692
Grand Total			2018-2023	1,972,706,398	1,182	19,118

All requested counties have experienced multiple disasters in the past five years. Many of those communities are awaiting reimbursement for multiple declared disaster events are experiencing overwhelming fiscal challenges. In the past 24 months, over \$857.5 million has been disbursed to Public Assistance subrecipients such as local governments, state agencies, and certain private nonprofits.

Over the past two years alone, the Commonwealth has distributed more than \$160.6 million in state funding to counties, cities, school districts, state agencies, and nonprofit utility providers to ease their fiscal liquidity strain and pay for recovery costs that are not eligible for FEMA assistance. More than \$52 million, in donations from citizens and the private sector, was distributed to survivors of the tornados of 2021. Now many of those citizens are once again in recovery mode.

Socioeconomic References

As evidenced by the attached information, the socioeconomic vulnerability of the many affected communities to the impact of disasters is serious. Many have experienced a population decline during the past decade. Counties with small populations have small tax bases, and, especially in the eastern portion of the state, have high percentages of citizens with disabilities that exceed the national average. The per capita income in those same counties is significantly below the state and national averages. (See Attachment 5).

Since December 2021, Kentucky has received six major disaster declarations which include the two largest disasters in its history: the December 2021 tornado outbreak (DR-4630) and the July 2022 flooding in eastern Kentucky (DR-4663). Employees of FEMA, the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management, and applicants have been in nonstop response and recovery modes since the 2021 tornadoes.

Program Requests

Individuals and Households Assistance Program: The state and impacted local governments do not have the capacity to aid citizens as they try to recover from yet another disaster. The impacted citizens need help. I ask that you declare a Major Disaster Declaration for this event that includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency Individuals and Households Assistance Program for the 15 counties of:

Butler	Clay	Logan	Trigg
Caldwell	Greenup	Muhlenberg	Warren
Calloway	Hopkins	Simpson	Whitley
Christian	Knox	Todd	

Damage assessments have been performed in these requested counties and the Individuals and Households Assistance Program Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment report is included with this request.

I also request the Public Assistance Program for the 55 counties of:

Adair	Clay	Green	Livingston	Muhlenberg	Washington
Allen	Clinton	Hart	Logan	Ohio	Wayne
Ballard	Crittenden	Hickman	Lyon	Owsley	Whitley
Barren	Cumberland	Hopkins	Marshall	Pulaski	Woodford
Breckinridge	Edmonson	Jackson	McCreary	Rockcastle	
Butler	Estill	Knox	McLean	Russell	
Caldwell	Fulton	Larue	Meade	Simpson	
Calloway	Garrard	Laurel	Menifee	Todd	
Carlisle	Graves	Lee	Metcalfe	Trigg	
Christian	Grayson	Leslie	Monroe	Warren	

Damage assessments have been performed in these requested counties and the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment report is included with this request.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. The Commonwealth will be grateful to work again with our federal partners to assist with the recovery of its impacted citizens.

Sincerely,

Andy Beshear
Governor

cc: Eric Gibson
Craig Levy

Enclosures:

OMB No.1660-009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

- A. Individuals Assistance
- B. Public Assistance
- C. Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs
- D. Historic Snowfall

Attachments 1-5

10. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment*

Individual Assistance Dates Performed **Requested** May 29, 2024 **Start** May 31, 2024 **End** Jun 13, 2024

Individual Assistance Accessibility Problems (Areas that could not be accessed, and why)

Public Assistance Dates Performed **Requested** May 29, 2024 **Start** Jun 4, 2024 **End** Jun 14, 2024

Public Assistance Accessibility Problems (Areas that could not be accessed, and why)

11. Programs and Areas Requested

Individual Assistance N/A Individuals and Households Program Crisis Counseling Program Disaster Unemployment Assistance
 All Disaster Case Management Disaster Legal Services Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Assistance

For the following jurisdictions, specify programs and areas (counties, parishes, independent cities; for Indian tribal government, list tribe(s) and/or tribal area(s)) If additional space is needed, please enclose additional documentation).

Butler Clay Logan Trigg
Caldwell Greenup Muhlenberg Warren
Calloway Hopkins Simpson Whitley
Christian Knox Todd

For States, identify Federally-recognized Tribes in the requested counties (if applicable).

N/A

Please see **Enclosure A: Supplemental Information for Individual Assistance** for additional information in support of this request*.

**Not Required for Emergency Declaration Request*

11. Programs and Areas Requested (Continued)

Public Assistance N/A Debris Removal (Category A) Emergency Protective Measures (Category B) Permanent Work (Categories C-G)* (not available for Emergency Declaration Requests)

For the following jurisdictions, specify programs and areas (counties, parishes, independent cities; for Indian tribal government, list tribe(s) and/or tribal area(s)). If additional space is needed or your request includes different categories of work for different jurisdictions; please enclose additional documentation.

The counties of::

Adair, Allen, Ballard, Barren, Breckinridge, Butler, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Clay, Clinton, Crittenden, Cumberland, Edmonson, Estill, Fulton, Garrard, Graves, Grayson, Green, Hart, Hickman, Hopkins, Jackson, Knox, Larue, Laurel, Lee, Leslie, Livingston, Logan, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McCreary, McLean, Meade, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Muhlenberg, Ohio, Owsley, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Simpson, Todd, Trigg, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Whitley, Woodford

For States, identify Federally-recognized Tribes included in the requested counties (if applicable).

N/A

Please see **Enclosure B: Supplemental Information for Public Assistance** for additional information in support of this request*.

Indemnification for Debris Removal Activity

I do not anticipate the need for debris removal.

I anticipate the need for debris removal, which poses an immediate threat to lives, public health and safety. Pursuant to Sections 403 and 407 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170b & 5173, the State or Indian tribal government agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America for any claims arising from the removal of debris or wreckage for this disaster. The State or Indian tribal government agrees that debris removal from public and private property will not occur until the landowner signs an unconditional authorization for the removal of debris.

I do not request direct Federal assistance at this time.

Request for Direct Federal Assistance

I request direct Federal assistance for work and services to save lives and protect property, and:

a. I request the following type(s) of assistance:

b. List of reasons why State and local or Indian tribal government cannot perform, or contract for, required work and services.

c. In accordance with 44 C.F.R. § 206.208, the State or Indian tribal government agrees that it will, with respect to direct Federal assistance: (1) Provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements, and rights-of-ways necessary to accomplish the approved work; (2) Hold and save the United States free from damages due to the requested work, and shall indemnify the Federal Government against any claims arising from such work; (3) Provide reimbursement to FEMA for the non-Federal share of the cost of such work in accordance with the provisions of the FEMA-State or FEMA-Tribe Agreement ; and (4) Assist the performing Federal agency in all support and local jurisdictional matters.

Request for Snow Assistance

N/A I request snow assistance.

Snow assistance for the following jurisdictions (Specify counties, independent cities or tribes and/or tribal areas).

N/A

Please see **Enclosure D: Historic and Current Snowfall Data** for additional information in support of this request*.

*Not Required for Emergency Declaration Request

11. Programs and Areas Requested (Continued)

Hazard Mitigation* Statewide **OR**

For the following specific counties, parishes, independent cities or tribes and/or tribal areas.

12. Mitigation Plan Information*

a. Mitigation Plan Expiration Date October 26, 2028 b. Type of Plan Enhanced Standard

13. Other Federal Agency Programs

I do not anticipate requirements from Other Federal Agencies I do anticipate requirements from Other Federal Agencies

Please see **Enclosure C**: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs for additional information in support of this request*.

14. Findings and Certifications

I certify the following:

a. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local government or Indian tribal government and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary.

b. In response to this incident, I have taken appropriate action under State or tribal law and have directed the execution of the State or Tribal Emergency Plan on May 26, 2024 in accordance with the Stafford Act.

c. The State and local governments, or Indian tribal government will assume all applicable non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act.

15. List of Enclosures and Supporting Documentation

Cover Letter Enclosure A (Individual Assistance)* Enclosure B (Public Assistance)*
 Enclosure C (Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs) Enclosure D (Historic and Current Snowfall Data)
 Additional Supporting Documentation Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,


Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's Signature

June 14, 2024

Date

If anyone except the Governor or Tribal Chief Executive signs this document, please provide the documentation that establishes that this individual has the legal authority to act on behalf of the Governor or Tribal Chief Executive.

*Not Required for Emergency Declaration Request