



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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May 20, 2025

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20502-0001

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

Re: Request for Major Disaster Declaration

Dear President Trump:

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 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare an expedited major disaster for the Commonwealth of Kentucky due to severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, landslides, and flooding that began May 16, 2025, and continues. This event produced significant rainfall, widespread deadly tornadic activity, hurricane-force winds, and large damaging hail. This event resulted in 19 fatalities, destroyed and heavily damaged homes, residences, and businesses, created impassable roadways, loss of utilities, and disrupted critical governmental services. This system originated in Missouri and moved eastward across southern Kentucky with a total track distance that exceeded 600 miles. While the National Weather Service continues to examine the tornadoes, there were at least four that severely impacted multiple counties. **See Tornado Maps Attachment 1.**

**States of Emergency**

In response to the National Weather forecasts and warnings, on May 16, 2025, I issued Executive Order 2025-305 and declared a State of Emergency, which activated the Emergency Operations Plan and the Commonwealth's Emergency Operations Center, as authorized by Kentucky Revised Statute Chapter 39A. I also issued an additional Executive Order 2025-306 which prohibits any person from selling or offering to sell any good or service, delineated in KRS 367.375(1)(b), at a price grossly in excess of the price prior to the declaration by Executive Order 2025-305. On May 17, 2025, I issued a State of Emergency Order, 2025-307, which authorizes emergency prescription refill for a period of 30 days. **See States of Emergency Orders Attachment 2.**

The Commonwealth's State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Frankfort began monitoring activities on Thursday May 15, 2025. On Friday May 16 at 4:00 PM, the monitoring elevated to Level 3.

The SEOC transitioned to a full Level 1 activation of the SEOC by late afternoon. The SEOC continues full activation as of the writing of this letter.

Emergency Support Functions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, and 13 were activated to the SEOC. Also present are the Kentucky National Guard, the National Weather Service, and the Kentucky State Police. Members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Integration Team (FIT) provided on-site support to the SEOC.

## Deaths

[illegible]

County breakdown:	
Laurel	17
Pulaski	1
Russell	1
TOTAL	19

### **Assistance from Voluntary Agencies**

The work and efforts of voluntary organizations and unaffiliated volunteers have played and will continue to play a vital role in dealing with the wide variety of impacts brought to bear by this event. The primary focus of volunteer organizations, to date, has been the sheltering and feeding of survivors.

The Kentucky Department of Parks is providing sheltering for displaced survivors at park facilities close to the impacted areas. The Kentucky Division of Emergency Management is also providing alternative housing solutions through the use of travel trailers, motels, and AirBnBs. Including this event with DR-4860 and DR-4864, the Commonwealth is currently sheltering more than 800 individuals.

Donations and assistance have been provided by a myriad of organizations as demonstrated by the following synopsis.

- The Walmart Corporation has provided meals, free tetanus shots.
- Tides Loads of Hope laundry service to London Kentucky.
- Save the Children has supplied hygiene kits, diapers and wipes.
- The American Red Cross established a reception center in Pulaski County in an area adjacent to the tornado impact zone.
- In the Laurel County and Pulaski County areas, eleven local churches are providing pet care, hot meals, supplies, and sheltering.
- Local veterinarian clinics are providing pet food and sheltering.
- The Kentucky State Police has partnered with the American Red Cross to reunite families that are looking for missing loved ones.
- The Kentucky Bar Association is providing legal aid services for survivors.
- Feeding Operations are being provided by:
  - Mercy Chefs;
  - Faith Assembly of God;
  - Salvation Army with Amanda KY Baptist Church;
  - Rapid Relief; and
  - Convey of Hope.
- Other active organizations include the Salvation Army, Samaritans Purse, Cajun Navy Relief, Masters of Disasters, Global Empowerment Mission, Southern Baptists, and Minuteman Disaster.

### **Event Response**

All National Weather Service offices assigned to Kentucky issued forecasts regarding the potential for severe weather, days in advance of the event. The offices conducted storm briefings before and during the event. State and local officials and emergency managers attended the briefings.

As this event unfolded, local emergency management offices submitted requests to the SEOC for critically-needed resources.

<b>Requests for Emergency Support Function (ESF) Resources and Support</b>	
ESF 1 TRANSPORTATION	Transportation Haul Missions, Road Message Boards, Road Barricades, Debris Clearance Equipment
ESF 2 COMMUNICATIONS	(2) Regional Communication and Charging Trailers, Mobile Repeaters, SatColt
ESF 3 PUBLIC WORKS	Water Tower and Pump Station Engineering Support
ESF 4 FIREFIGHTING	Cut and Toss Team
ESF 5 INFORMATION/PLANNING	KYEM Mobile Command Vehicle, GIS Contract Support, (4) Liaison Officers, Incident Management Team, Volunteer and Donations Manager,
ESF 6 MASS CARE, HUMAN SERVICES	Red Cross Reception Center, Red Cross Shelter
ESF 7 LOGISTICS	Ice Trailer, SAR UTV Tire Replacement, Material Handling Equipment, EOC Meals, Aerial Flight Photography for overlay with parcel layer, Contract EOC Augmentation
ESF 8 PUBLIC HEALTH/MEDICAL SERVICES	Shower Trailer, O2 Bottles, (2) Ambulance Strike Teams, (2) Fatality Management Trailers, (2) Medical Buses, Kentucky Community Crisis Response Team, (30) Body bags
ESF 9 SEARCH AND RESCUE	USAR Incident Response Team, (8) Collapsed Structure Response Teams,
ESF 10 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	N/A
ESF 11 AG/NATURAL RESOURCES	N/A
ESF 12 ENERGY	Critical Power Restoration Prioritization
ESF 13 PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY	16 Law Enforcement Augmentation Personnel
Kentucky National Guard	(1) Fatality Special Response Team, (1) Collapsed Structure Response Team, (2) Wide Area Search Team, (2) Toss Teams, UH 60 Helicopter Recon Flight, First Responder Augmentation

Many thousands of citizens have been severely impacted. Search and rescue teams, local emergency management offices, and state responders have been working nonstop since the onset of this event. The following teams were deployed by the SEOC:

Deployed to Somerset:

Lexington Fire Department  
Jessamine County Fire Department  
Campbellsville Fire Department

Deployed to London:

Anchorage/Middletown Fire Department  
Louisville/Jefferson County Fire Department  
Northern KY Rescue Team.

Upon arrival at their assigned areas, these teams performed search and rescue activities. Their efforts included the recovery of human remains, evacuation of citizens and pets, and wellness checks.

In addition to SEOC response activities, the Commonwealth established a call center for use by impacted citizens in need of help. Those needing sheltering, roof tarping, debris removal, etc. can call this center and the operators pass their needs to the volunteer agencies most capable of assisting. Following the April disaster event (DR-4864) this center has received calls from more than 5,000 impacted citizens seeking help.

The Commonwealth has provided pallets of water and ready-to-eat meals for distribution, by the counties, to impacted citizens.

County and city emergency management and law officials across the state also conducted rescues, evacuations, and wellness checks. In Laurel and Pulaski counties, the Kentucky State Police extracted dozens of injured citizens from destroyed homes and transported seriously injured, in their cruisers, to the nearest hospitals. Temporary morgues were established in the most-heavily impacted areas.

Certainly, the most destruction occurred in Laurel and Pulaski counties. Aerial reconnaissance shows that the tornado was on the ground for many miles. The critical response efforts were severely hampered due to roadways clogged with vegetative and building debris. Many downed electrical lines were live and dangerous.

At the peak of the storm's impact, there were 172,711 customers along the tornado and straight-line paths who lost power. As of this letter's date, the power outages still exceed 20,000. The majority of rural Kentucky communities receive electric service from power cooperatives. The South Kentucky Rural Electric Cooperative headquarters, located in Pulaski County, was destroyed by the tornado that ravaged the community of Somerset. Kentucky Emergency Management deployed its Mobile Command Vehicle to the cooperative for use as a coordination center for the deployment of power restoration units that arrived from other states. **See Power Outage Data Attachment 3.**

Flooding is an aftermath of the significant rainfall produced by this system. The National Weather Service has issued multiple flood watches for the major Kentucky tributaries that empty into the Ohio River. These rivers are not expected to crest until perhaps May 21. This date could be extended due to the forecasts that indicate a significant rain event will cover the state on May 20.

In Pulaski County, a tornado crossed Interstate 75. The tornado generated massive amounts of debris in the area; some of which was deposited on the highway. Significant efforts were made by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the Kentucky State Police, and the Kentucky National Guard to respond to the critical road conditions, especially the interstate and emergency routes. Most of the impacted rural

routes were out of commission longer than the interstates and parkways. Most counties do not have sufficient equipment or the manpower needed to deal with the massive debris generated by this event. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and county road departments have been working continuously to clear routes. Impassable roads have halted mail delivery in some areas.

The economic impact of this event will be extensive and long lasting as there are many businesses severely impacted or destroyed. Shuttered business will result in an escalation of unemployment. Tourism is an important Kentucky industry. Laurel and Pulaski counties are situated in an area that relies heavily on tourism. Tourist season is just beginning and the area's lodging inventory will be filled with survivors, curtailing the normal seasonal tourist income. It is likely that many tourists, hearing of this disaster, will opt to vacation elsewhere.

### **Preliminary Damage Assessments**

Joint preliminary damage assessments have begun in the most significantly-impacted counties. At this point in time many local emergency management offices responsible for performing initial damage assessments have just concluded performing property protection and life saving measures. On May 19, 2025, KYEM, FEMA, and local officials began assessing damages to homes, residences, and businesses in seven counties. Preliminary Damage Assessments have begun but are not complete. However, an analysis of aerial photography compared with pre-disaster photos and records of county Property Valuation Administrators, indicates the likelihood that over 1,500 homes have been either destroyed or received major damage. That number can soar to over 5,000 when all impact levels are considered.

### **Disaster History of Impacted Areas for the Previous 24 Months**

During the past 24 months, Kentucky has experienced the following events which resulted in major disaster presidential declarations:

2023

DR-4702-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Flooding, Landslides
DR-4711-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides

2024

DR-4782-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Landslides, Mudslides
DR-4804-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Landslides, Mudslides
DR-4848-KY	Remnants of Hurricane Helene

2025

DR-4860-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Landslides, Mudslides
DR-4864-KY	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Flooding, Landslides

In addition to these declared disasters, Kentucky has experienced numerous localized severe weather events over the past 12 months. There were various severe storm events which included snow, ice, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds. Although these events did not rise to the level of declared federal major disasters, extensive costs were incurred by state and local governments in the response to the events and recovery from the damages.

The following is a complete disaster declaration history for the counties in need of immediate Individuals and Households Assistance:

Caldwell	DR #	Year	Pulaski	DR #	Year	Todd	DR #	Year
12	1802	2008	8	1523	2004	7	1578	2005
	1818	2009		1912	2010		1818	2009
	1976	2011		4497	2020		4278	2016
	4216	2015		4592	2021		4497	2020
	4278	2016		4595	2021		4630	2021
	4361	2018		4702	2023		4702	2023
	4497	2020		4804	2024		4804	2024
	4630	2021		4860	2025			
	4702	2023				Trigg 12	1578	2005
	4711	2023	Russell 9	1537	2004		1802	2008
	4804	2024		1841	2009		1818	2009
	4860	2025		1912	2010		1841	2009
Christian 10				4057	2012		1912	2010
	1746	2008		4428	2019		4218	2015
	1818	2009		4497	2020		4278	2016
	1912	2010		4702	2023		4361	2018
	4278	2016		4804	2024		4497	2020
	4497	2020		4860	2025		4702	2023
	4630	2021					4804	2024
	4643	2022	Trigg 12				4860	2025
	4702	2023		1578	2005			
	4804	2024		1802	2008			
	4864	2025		1818	2009			
Laurel 10				1841	2009			
				1912	2010			
	1414	2002		4218	2015			
	1523	2004		4278	2016			
	4057	2012		4361	2018			
	4428	2019		4497	2020			
	4497	2020		4702	2023			
	4592	2021		4804	2024			
	4595	2021		4860	2025			
	4702	2023						
	4804	2024						
	4860	2025						

## Socioeconomic Information

The per capita personal income of Kentuckians has improved significantly however Kentucky continues to hover around 80 percent of the national average but is 90% of its competitor states. Household income in Kentucky is 74 percent of the U.S. median. Approximately 60 percent of Kentucky households make less than \$75,000 annually. Certain regions of the state have shown great growth. However, there is a core grouping of counties in Appalachia still in the bottom five percent of economic vitality. Aging populations and high disability rates contribute to the economic challenges of the region. See **Socioeconomic Data Attachment 4**.

## State Cost Participation

As evidenced by the disaster histories, the attached US Census Bureau data, and financial statements, the impacted areas cannot recover from this event without assistance. The Kentucky Legislature has been very proactive in assisting impacted communities to recover from these events. State funding known as SAFE Funds a have been allocated by the legislature for DR-4860 (the 2021 Mayfield Tornado), DR-4663 (2022 Severe Flooding in E Kentucky), and DR-4860 (2025 E KY Flooding). To date, the Commonwealth has distributed over \$300 million to local governments, school districts, and nonprofit utility providers. Eligibility for funding is limited to disaster-caused needs such as strained fiscal liquidity, the match required for FEMA projects, and lost revenues. To date, approximately \$300 million has been distributed through these special funds.

The Commonwealth also participates in the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation programs by covering 12% of the required applicant match for all local government, school districts, and private nonprofit subrecipients. The state also partners with FEMA in other needs assistance as provided by the Individuals and Households Assistance Program. See **Fiscal Data Information 5**.

## **Damages by Category**

### **Category A: Debris Removal**

There is a significant amount of debris – both vegetative and residential – caused by the winds and tornadoes. Using aerial imagery and data bases of county property valuation offices, it is estimated that the quantity of debris will exceed 1.5 million cubic yards and cost in excess of \$59 million to remove and dispose of.

### **Category B: Emergency Protective Measures**

Expenses associated with this category will be significant. This event will require a significant level of non-congregate sheltering. Counties across the state activated their emergency operations centers, as did the state. The SEOC deployed significant numbers of Search and Rescue Teams and as well as the Kentucky State Police and National Guard. These entities assisted with survivor extractions and safeguarding the impact zones from looting.

### **Category C: Roads and Bridges**

There was flooding associated with this event which caused damages to roads and bridges. Additionally, there were mudslides and landslides in several areas. These slides closed roadways, and required significant effort to clear and secure the sites so as to allow resumption of traffic

### **Category D: Water Control Facilities**

Currently, at this time there are no reported damages to water control facilities other than the levee failure in Daviess County

### **Category E: Buildings and Equipment**

A number of government buildings were severely damaged, including an airport, vintage airplanes, and hangers.

### **Category F: Utilities**

There is a great deal of damages to electric distribution systems as evidences by the large number of power outages that occurred. The cost estimates have not yet been submitted as the electric providers are still laser focused on restoration measures. In Union County, a tornado struck and destroyed the county's water distribution pump building. The Kentucky Division of Water is assisting the county in restoration and the identification of a permanent repair. The associated costs are not know at this time.

### **Category G: Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Other Facilities**

There are reported damages at Kentucky State Parks and community parks. The Laurel County fairgrounds facility was totally destroyed with all structures having been leveled.

## **Insurance Coverage for Damaged Public Assistance Elements**

The overwhelming majority of the identified, potentially eligible Public Assistance damages is not covered under standard insurance policies. It is unknown at this time as to what level of insurance is carried by impacted households that will be seeking assistance from the Individuals and Households Assistance Program.



## Conclusion

State agencies, local governments, and the Commonwealth's citizens have been significantly affected by this event. The greatest impact has been felt by citizens who lost loved ones and whose homes were severely damaged or destroyed. Significant costs will be associated with loss of property and the repair or replacement of impacted residences.

The loss of any citizen is tragic, but given the circumstances, it is somewhat miraculous that this storm did not cause more than 19 fatalities. Local governments and state agencies responded in an efficient and professional manner. Citizens have been patient and responsible. Unfortunately, since the beginning of the year Kentucky has experienced four significant disaster events and now this new storm system struck, causing even more damages and hardships.

I am asking for an expedited major disaster declaration so as to begin critical recovery efforts for seriously impacted citizens and communities. With just one day of assessments performed, and more assessments to be performed, the results clearly demonstrate severity, impact, and need. In making your decision regarding this declaration request, I ask that you consider the totality of the circumstances facing the Commonwealth. Without assistance, it is improbable that recovery will be fully realized.

Due to the severity of this storm event, and having met the language and intent of the Robert T Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and 44 Code of Federal Regulations, I am requesting an expedited Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Kentucky as a result of this herein-described severe weather event and request you to authorize and make available all programs under the Individuals and Households Assistance Program for the following counties:

Caldwell	Russell
Christian	Todd
Laurel	Trigg
Pulaski	Union

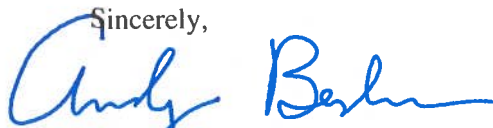
I also request the Public Assistance Program Categories A and B for the counties of:

Caldwell	LaRue	Rockcastle
Casey	Laurel	Russell
Christian	Lee	Todd
Clay	Leslie	Trigg
Clinton	Logan	Union
Estill	Lyon	Wayne
Jackson	McCreary	
Knox	Pulaski	

I also request Hazard Mitigation for the entire Commonwealth.

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

Sincerely,



Andy Beshear  
Governor

cc: Eric Gibson

Enclosures

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

Enclosure A: Individual Assistance

Enclosure B: Public Assistance

Enclosure C: Other Federal Programs

Enclosure D: Not Applicable

Attachments

Attachment 1: States of Emergency

Attachment 2: Tornado Maps

Attachment 3: Power Outage Data

Attachment 4: Socioeconomic Data

Attachment 6: Fiscal Data