



# STATE OF UTAH

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## GOVERNOR'S REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION MAJOR DISASTER

April 6, 2017

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

Through: Nancy Dragani  
Acting Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region VIII  
Denver Federal Building  
Building 710, Box 25267  
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Mr. President:

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 a major disaster for the State of UTAH be declared for the counties of Box Elder and Cache, as a result of heavy rain, snow, and extensive snowmelt beginning on February 7 through February 27, 2017.

Entering into February 2017, Northern Utah had near record levels of over 200% snowpack in some locations, with 200-400% normal precipitation. Beginning February 4 through February 27, 2017, weather systems moved through Utah bringing over 4 inches of rain and warmer temperatures of up to 20 degrees above normal. The combination of high snowpack levels, rain, and above normal temperatures quickly melted lower elevation snow and caused widespread overland flooding.

Starting on February 4, 2017, the average temperatures rose to above normal, this above normal temperature trend lasted through February 22, 2017, in Box Elder County and February 24, 2017, in Cache County. As a result of the increased temperatures, significant snowmelt occurred on the Box Elder County valley floor of around 4200 feet elevation up to 7500 feet. The snow water equivalent from February 9, 2017, to February 15, 2017, was 3.2 inches of snowmelt. Additionally, a continuous series of rainfall events occurred during that same time

frame, with over 3 inches of rainfall in Box Elder. This level of precipitation was unable to be absorbed by the previously and sometimes frozen soil. Furthermore, the soil within the county is primarily clay, which has an extraordinary low absorption rate. As a result, the melting snow and rain were unable to penetrate the soil causing, widespread sheet and field flooding. This type of flooding is unusual for Utah and is not something the locals experience often, if ever.

On February 8, 2017, the failure of the Twentyone Mile Dam near Montello, Nevada, released fast-moving water that caused flooding damages across portions of Northern Utah impacting roads, water conveyance structures, and railroad infrastructure.

Cache County experienced several weeks of above average temperatures between February 4, 2017, and February 23, 2017, with an average 5.5 degrees above normal and several days with 20 degrees above normal. Between those dates, the county received 4.35 inches of rain on top of the existing above average snowpack, which quickly melted. While the rivers and reservoirs were full, the flooding was due to the excessive snowmelt and rain that were not able to penetrate the frozen ground and overland flooding quickly overwhelmed community stormwater systems.

The National Weather Service (NWS) contributed weather related statistics and data for disaster reports, letters, and declaration processes related to this incident. The NWS monitored weather conditions and provided DEM and local communities with timely updates on evolving weather patterns and anticipated precipitation. The NWS concurs with all weather-related statistics included in this document.

The flooding response and resulting damages overwhelmed the capabilities of local jurisdictions in Box Elder and Cache counties in Northern Utah, resulting in local disaster declarations and requests for State assistance. Box Elder County declared a local emergency on February 14, 2017, and Cache County declared a local emergency on February 15, 2017.

In addition to these two counties, the State also responded to flooding incidents statewide. While not reaching their disaster impact thresholds, Rich, Weber, Wasatch, Utah, and Morgan Counties experienced damages from flooding due to rain and snowmelt. The Utah Department of Transportation, Highway Patrol, and Geologic Survey responded to landslides and road damage across the state. The State Emergency Management Liaisons provided assistance to many local jurisdictions.

In response to the situation, I initiated the appropriate actions under State law and directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan on ***February 9, 2017***; in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act. The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated to a level 3 on February 9, 2017, in response to the widespread flooding, and elevated to a level 2 on February 22, 2017, due to the local jurisdictions being overwhelmed. Under the State EOC the following Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) were activated to assist local response: ESF#3 Public Works, ESF#13 Public Safety, ESF#14 Recovery, ESF#15 Public Affairs, and ESF#16 Military Support.

On ***March 31, 2017***, I declared a State of Emergency for Utah and requested a Federal

validation of the State and Local Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs). Local PDAs were conducted February 24, 2017, through the week of March 27, 2017. The local PDA process was hindered by continued storms and flooding, which required the counties' attention to response and life safety. Ongoing flooding and the remoteness of rural locations made traveling to damaged sites difficult, if not impossible, and compounded the damage assessment process.

The State validation of the local PDAs began March 9, 2017, and was completed when the State submitted their PDA documentation to FEMA Region VIII on March 31, 2017. State verifications were conducted in Box Elder and Cache Counties. While the State responded and provided resources to other local jurisdictions throughout the State which had significant flooding, these areas did not have enough damage to warrant a State-level PDA.

FEMA validated \$5,983,005 in damages for Box Elder and Cache counties caused by the February heavy rain, snow, and extensive snowmelt incident. The total verified damage equates to \$2.16 per capita, well above the State's per capita indicator of \$1.43. Box Elder County sustained \$3,238,564 in damages, or \$64.80 per capita locally. Cache County sustained \$2,744,441 in damages, or \$24.36 per capita. The majority of damage in both counties is in Category C: Road Systems with damages claimed in Emergency Work, Water Control, and Buildings.

Response activities provided by State and voluntary agencies included:

The Utah Division of Emergency Management activated the State Emergency Operation Center to monitor the situation and coordinate response and recovery services, provided pumps to assist locals in moving water away from roadways and bridges and away from homes and businesses, and assisted in finding sandbags and sandbagging machines. In response to this locally declared disaster, the State Disaster Recovery Restricted Account, a restricted account within the General Fund, can provide funds to cover certain State costs for emergency disaster services.

The Utah National Guard was activated to assist locals in response to the flooding. Task Force 97th TRP CMD personnel worked in Box Elder County providing a sandbag machine and labor in filling sandbags.

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) responded to numerous road damage calls across the State during February. Mudslides closed SR-189 in Provo Canyon and SR-92 in American Fork Canyon and smaller amounts of debris and standing water needed to be cleared across the state.

The Utah Geological Survey (UGS) provided Geologic Emergency Response in support of the flooding incident by reconnaissance of flood-induced landslides. UGS monitored various landslides throughout northern Utah, advising local officials on the risks and vulnerabilities from those landslides.

The Utah Highway Patrol (UHP) provided traffic control on closed highways and roads to allow UDOT and local jurisdictions to clear mud and debris and to prevent traffic from

driving through standing water.

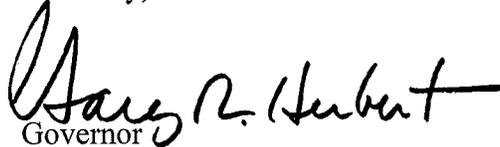
Through mutual aid, Salt Lake County provided personnel and trucks to assist local public works officials who were exhausted from the flood fight operations.

The Red Cross, activated under the State Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), opened two Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC) and 113 cases, serving 436 clients. Of the 113 cases opened, 13 were considered to have major or destroyed disaster assessment classifications and received direct financial assistance through the Red Cross. Agencies that were included in the MARC: Red Cross, Habitat, 211/United Way, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Bear River Health, Box Elder County Emergency Management, and Salvation Army.

The heavy flooding caused significant damage in rural sections of Utah. Sheet flooding ran across large tracts of land, damaging roads and making them impassable. Box Elder and Cache Counties have over \$5 million in eligible FEMA Public Assistance damage to their road systems. This amount of road damage causes a considerable burden to local residents, road users, and the rural communities who have to repair them. The local communities will suffer significant hardship if left to recover on their own. This incident substantially affects the ranchers and farmers throughout these counties who have received damages to their property and equipment and now have saturated fields. Railroad damages were so severe that trains were rerouted. Sewer systems in small communities were overwhelmed by the increased surface inflow of water and backed up into the basement drains of local residents. Dams were filled to capacity and had to increase their discharge rates in order to allow room for higher volume runoff. This increase in dam discharge rates impacted already swollen rivers and streams.

Local resources were exhausted and support from surrounding communities was limited due to their own flooding issues. A considerable amount of snowpack remains in the mountains, and we expect more flooding through June. I appreciate your support and understanding in our time of need as flooding continues to pose a threat to this State.

Sincerely,

  
Governor

Enclosures

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

B: Supplemental Information for Public Assistance

C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs