

Federal Assistance for South Carolina Communities Damaged by the Recent Floods

Prior to the arrival of the storm on October 2, 2015, the Governor submitted a request for a federal declaration of emergency for the State of South Carolina due to anticipated damages from the rainfall and effects of Hurricane Joaquin. The President declared a state of emergency for the State of South Carolina on October 3, 2015.

Due to very preliminary damage assessments in many counties around the State, state officials determined that the situation was of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments. The Governor submitted a verbal request for a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration on October 5, 2015, so that communities and citizens most affected by the storm would qualify for federal assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

What federal assistance has been requested?

In the request for a major disaster declaration, the Governor requested three types of assistance –

Individual Assistance - Provided to eligible individuals and households who as a direct result of a major disaster or emergency have uninsured or under-insured, necessary expenses and serious needs that they are unable to meet. Items covered by individual assistance include categories such as temporary housing, home repairs, vehicle replacement, and other necessary expenses.

Public Assistance – Provided to eligible governmental entities and some private non-profits for assistance for emergency work

Hazard Mitigation – Provided to eligible governmental entities and some private non-profits for assistance to take actions to prevent or reduce long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards

Which counties were included in the initial request?

The Governor requested all three types of assistance for Berkeley, Charleston, Clarendon, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Lexington, Richland, Sumter, Williamsburg, and Orangeburg counties.

Which counties have been designated by FEMA to receive assistance?

FEMA notified the State within hours after submission of the request of the following declaration:

Individual Assistance - FEMA designated the following as counties eligible to receive individual assistance: Charleston, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Lexington, Orangeburg, Richland, and Williamsburg.

Public Assistance – FEMA designated the following as counties eligible to receive public assistance for debris removal and emergency protective measures: Berkeley, Charleston, Clarendon, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Lexington, Orangeburg, Richland, Sumter, and Williamsburg.

Hazard Mitigation - All counties in the State of South Carolina are eligible to apply for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Will additional counties be designated?

Yes, it is anticipated that additional designations will be made. All requested counties were designated eligible to receive public assistance and hazard mitigation funds. State officials intend to request additional designations by FEMA for individual and public assistance. The following process will be followed by state and county officials to support these designations:

1. Counties assess damages to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure (to the extent they are able) and report damages to SCEMD.
2. FEMA/State/local Preliminary Damage Assessment teams go to the county to review the damages.
3. Based on the assessments, the Governor will make requests to designate additional counties.
4. FEMA will notify the State of its determination.

What factors are considered in making designations?

For individual assistance the following factors are considered:

- a. Extent of damages (number of uninsured, majorly damaged or destroyed homes)
- b. Concentration of damages (high concentration of damages in a small area)
- c. Trauma (deaths, injuries, large scale disruption of community services)
- d. Special Populations (e.g. elderly, low income, persons with disabilities, unemployed)
- e. Other assistance available (insurance and voluntary agencies)
- f. Recent multiple disasters (disaster history within the last 12 months)

For public assistance the following factors are considered:

- a. The damages must exceed a per capita threshold (\$3.57) per county based on the 2010 census data

What is the timeline for additional declarations?

SCEMD has already been coordinating with FEMA to conduct damage assessments for those counties not initially approved under the FEMA individual assistance designation (Berkeley, Sumter, and Clarendon) or in the initial major disaster declaration to initiate the process of expanding the declaration. SCEMD is prioritizing the counties that still have a large number of citizens in shelters. SCEMD will contact the counties to arrange a date and time to conduct these assessments and anticipates assessments will begin as early as tomorrow based on the recognized immediate need.

Is additional federal assistance available?

Yes, FEMA and the Small Business Administration work together in assisting survivors in a declared disaster area. In addition to grants available from FEMA, the SBA provides low-interest disaster loans to businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners, and renters that can be used to repair or replace real estate, personal property, machinery and equipment, and inventory and business assets.