

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

December 16, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500

Through: Katherine Fox, FEMA Region VIII Administrator Acting

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 (the Stafford Act), and 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I respectfully request that you issue an emergency declaration for the State of Montana in response to a catastrophic severe storm and flooding event in Montana, impacting Lincoln County, Sanders County, and the Blackfeet Tribe.

Summary:

Beginning December 8, 2025, a prolonged atmospheric river event impacted northwest Montana, bringing sustained rainfall and warm temperatures that led to widespread flooding across Lincoln County and Sanders County. Antecedent precipitation between December 5–9 had already saturated soils and primed the mountain snowpack, setting the stage for a significant rain-on-snow event.

On December 10–11, intense rainfall combined with rapid snowmelt caused flash flooding and elevated river levels. Notable 24-hour precipitation totals included 5.10 inches at Poorman Creek, Montana (3rd highest on record), and 5.50 inches at Bear Mountain, Idaho (6th highest). Libby, Montana, recorded 1.05 inches, its 8th highest daily total.

Hydrological impacts included the Fisher River peaking above minor flood stage at 7.67 feet and the Yaak River reaching 8.30 feet, also exceeding minor flood stage. Modeled snowpack data confirmed widespread melt due to isothermal conditions and warm rain, contributing significantly to runoff and flooding.

These extreme conditions led to infrastructure damage, including the failure of the Lower Flower Creek Dam, threatening water distribution for the City of Libby and prompting

immediate emergency response actions.

In addition to the widespread flooding, the atmospheric river event that struck northwest Montana on December 9, 2025, brought strong and damaging winds, particularly across Sanders County. Wind speeds began increasing during the afternoon of December 10 and peaked during the overnight hours into the morning of December 11. Local observations recorded gusts of up to 49 miles per hour in Hot Springs, with Plains and Thompson Falls experiencing peak gusts of 33 and 32 miles per hour, respectively.

While the National Weather Service does not maintain observing stations in the mountainous terrain of Sanders County, nearby high-elevation sites in adjacent counties recorded even stronger winds. Magee Peak in Shoshone County, Idaho, measured gusts of 59 miles per hour, while Point Six in Missoula County, Montana, recorded a peak gust of 66 miles per hour on December 10.

These high winds, combined with saturated soils from heavy rainfall and rapid snowmelt, contributed to hazardous conditions, increased the risk of falling trees and power outages, and compounded the overall impact of the flooding event on infrastructure and public safety.

We have received widespread wind in the affected area on Monday. Strong winds are expected beginning Tuesday morning, up to 50 mph, but increasing as we move into Wednesday morning with winds reaching speeds of 60-80 mph. The total precipitation forecast in the next 24 hours beginning Tuesday morning are 1.5-2.5" of rain in higher elevations, and .5-.75" of rain at the valley floor.

Wednesday brings a shift to snow, reaching valley floors by morning. Winds will peak early, with valley gusts of 50-70 mph and mountain gusts over 80 mph. Snow totals: trace to 2" in valleys, 8"-12" above 4,000 ft, with an 80% chance of 15"+ above 6,000 ft by Thursday. A flood watch is in place for residences below the Lower Flower Creek Dam.

Impacts:

In response to the emergency caused by the December 9, 2025, atmospheric river event, I have signed Executive Order 9-2025, officially declaring a state of disaster in the State of Montana. To support the response, I have activated the State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) and deployed Type III All-Hazard Incident Management Team to assist Lincoln County in managing this unforeseen crisis.

Multiple contractors have been engaged to provide specialized technical expertise, implement flood-fighting measures, and support both immediate response and recovery operations. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has mobilized dam safety engineers to conduct critical monitoring and emergency repairs on the compromised Lower Flower Creek Dam, which is essential to maintaining water delivery services for the City of Libby. Approximately 1,102 residential structures, 39 public structures, 19 industrial structures, and 283 commercial structures are served by this water system. Four thousand residents are

served by the water system.

In addition to state resources, Montana is actively coordinating with federal partners, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which is providing flood-fighting support in the City of Troy and technical assistance to the City of Libby in evaluating the extent of damage to the Lower Flower Creek Dam. Continued federal assistance will be necessary to ensure a sustainable drinking water delivery system for the City of Libby while a permanent repair to the dam is developed and implemented.

The failure of the Lower Flower Creek Dam has significantly disrupted public water delivery operations in Libby. Emergency actions were required to prevent further structural failure and the complete loss of the reservoir. In coordination with DNRC, the City lowered the reservoir by approximately two feet to relieve pressure on the dam. While this measure helped stabilize the structure, it also disrupted the hydraulic flow needed to transport water to the treatment plant. A temporary solution was implemented to restore water delivery; however, the turbidity of the water now exceeds safe drinking standards, posing a serious threat to public health and the continuity of essential services. The scale and urgency of the situation have exceeded the City of Libby and the State of Montana's capacity to respond effectively.

Further compounding the crisis is the concern over elevated levels of metals in the reservoir water being collected for treatment. Samples have been submitted to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for analysis. If results confirm unsafe levels of contamination, a "Do Not Consume" order may be issued. The City of Libby has no alternative water source, which would leave the community without access to potable water. In anticipation of this order, water distribution and supply needs are being coordinated through the state.

This severe storm event has not only compromised critical infrastructure but has also placed the health and safety of the affected population at serious risk. Immediate federal assistance is essential to stabilize the situation, support recovery efforts, and prevent further harm to the community.

While I have authorized the use of the State Disaster and Emergency Appropriation Fund, this funding continues to be drawn upon for numerous other active disasters.

Given the severity and complexity of this emergency, I respectfully request FEMA's assistance through an Emergency Declaration. Federal support is essential to ensure the health and safety of the affected population by helping address three critical needs resulting from the failure of the Lower Flower Creek Dam:

First need: "Emergency protective measures and engineering support to stabilize the Lower Flower Creek Dam and prevent catastrophic failure or loss of the reservoir."

Second need: "Assistance to ensure a safe, reliable potable water supply for the City of Libby, including support for temporary water treatment and distribution solutions, pending permanent dam repairs."

Third need: "Financial assistance to offset the costs of emergency measures, critical infrastructure stabilization, and planning for long-term recovery of the water system

and affected communities.”

Montana has faced numerous emergencies and disasters in recent years, many of which remain active and continue to draw on state resources. These include:

State-Issued Emergencies and Disasters (SFY 2020-2025):

- EO-2-2020: COVID-19 State of Emergency
- EO-3-2020: Extension of COVID-19 Emergency
- EO-4-2021: Energy Emergency
- EO-8-2021: June Windstorm
- EO-11-2021: Drought Emergency
- EO-12-2021: Wildland Fire Emergency
- EO-4-2022: Spring Flooding
- EO-1-2023: April Flooding
- EO-2-2023: Memorial Day Flooding
- EO-8-2024: May Flooding
- EO-9-2024: July Windstorm
- EO-10-2024: Miles City Windstorm
- EO-11-2024: Hamilton and Stevensville Windstorm
- EO-4-2025: Anaconda Manhunt Emergency
- EO-7-2025: Montana State Prison Water Supply Emergency
- EO-9-2025: Winter Flood

Federally Declared Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) Since 2020: Total Costs

- FEMA-5343-FM-MT -Huff Fire- \$338,885
- FEMA-5344-FM-MT-Bobcat Fire-\$6.1 million
- FEMA-5345-FM-MT -Snider/Rice Complex Fire-\$2 million
- FEMA-5346-FM-MT-Bridger Foothills Fire-\$6.1 million
- FEMA-5392-FM-MT-Robertson Draw Fire- \$2 million
- FEMA-5399-FM-MT-Buffalo Fire- \$334,005
- FEMA-5403-FM-MT-PF Fire-\$1.5 million
- FEMA-5406-FM-MT-Richard Spring Fire- \$5.1 million
- FEMA-5480-FM-MT -River Road East Fire- \$9.4 million
- FEMA-5507-FM-MT-Horse Gulch Fire- \$705,162
- FEMA-5611-FM-MT - Windy Rock Fire- \$55.9 million

Open Presidential Disaster Declarations: Total Costs

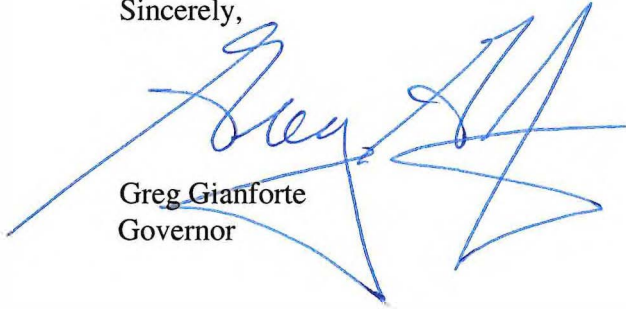
- FEMA-4508-DR-MT: COVID-19 Pandemic-\$74.2 million
- FEMA-4655-DR-MT: 2022 Severe Storms and Flooding-\$39.7 million
- FEMA-4726-DR-MT: 2023 Spring Flooding-\$5.1 million
- FEMA-4745-DR-MT: 2023 Spring Flooding-\$1.8 million
- FEMA-4801-DR-MT: 2024 Spring Flooding-\$4.6 million
- FEMA-4813-DR-MT: 2024 Missoula Windstorm-\$8.2 million

Should this request be approved, I certify that the State of Montana will assume all applicable non-federal cost shares as required under the Stafford Act.

I have designated Delila Bruno, Administrator for Montana Disaster & Emergency Services, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. She will serve as the primary point of contact for all coordination related to this emergency. Jake Ganieany, Bureau Chief for Recovery and Mitigation will serve as the Deputy State Coordinating Officer for this emergency.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your attention to this matter. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. My door is always open.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte", is written over a printed name and title. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Greg Gianforte
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Federal Emergency Management Agency
REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY

OMB Control Number 1660-0009

Expires 06/30/2026

1. Request Date 12/15/2025

Burden Disclosure Notice

Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 9 hours per response. The burden estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and submitting the form. This collection of information is required to obtain a benefit. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding the accuracy of the burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing the burden to: Information Collections Management, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, 500 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20472, Paperwork Reduction Project (1660-0009). **NOTE: Do not send your completed form to this address.**

Completion of this form including applicable attachments satisfies legal requirements for emergency and major disaster declaration requests under 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170 and 5191, respectively, as implemented at 44 C.F.R. §§ 206.35 and 206.36. Failure to use this form may result in a failure to meet these requirements and/or a delay in processing the request.

2a. Name of State (as defined in Stafford Act 102, 42 U.S.C. § 5122) or Indian tribal government requesting declaration.

State of Montana

2b. Population (as reported by 2020 Census) or estimated population of Indian tribal government's damaged area(s). 1,084,225

3. Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's Name

Greg Gianforte

4. Designation of State or Tribal Coordinating Officer upon declaration (if available) and phone number

Jake Ganieany 406-417-9234

5. Designation of Governor's Authorized Representative or Tribal Chief Executive Representative upon declaration (if available) and phone number

Delila Bruno 406-417-9232

6. Declaration Request For: ☐ Major Disaster (Stafford Act Sec. 401) ☒ Emergency (Stafford Act Sec. 501 (a))

7. Incident Period: Beginning Date 12/8/2025 End Date _____ or ☒ Continuing

If requesting a "continuing" incident period, enclose an official statement from a qualified Federal Government agency acknowledged as a national authority in a specific incident field (e.g., United States Geological Survey for seismic incidents, the National Weather Service for flooding).

7b. Type of Incident (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Drought ☐ Earthquake ☐ Explosion ☐ Fire ☒ Flood ☐ Hurricane ☐ Landslide ☐ Mudslide
☐ Severe Storm ☐ Snowstorm
☒ (rain, high water, wind-driven, rain, hail, lightning) ☐ (Must include Enclosure D: Historic and Current Snowfall Data) ☒ Straight-Line Winds
☐ Tidal Wave ☐ Tornado ☐ Tropical Depression ☐ Tropical Storm ☐ Tsunami ☐ Volcanic Eruption ☐ Winter Storm
☐ Other (please specify) _____

8. Description of damages (Short description of impacts of disaster on affected area and population). Include additional details in enclosed Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's cover letter.

Beginning on December 8, 2025, a severe atmospheric river and wind event caused widespread damage across multiple jurisdictions, particularly Lincoln County, Sanders County, and the Blackfeet Tribe, resulting in wind and flood damage. Most notably, floodwaters critically impacted the Lower Flower Creek Dam, the sole water source for the City of Libby. Emergency actions were required to prevent structural failure and total reservoir loss. Lowering the reservoir by two feet reduced pressure but disrupted water delivery to the treatment plant. A temporary fix restored flow, but water turbidity now exceeds safe standards, threatening public health and essential services. The scale and urgency of the situation have exceeded the City of Libby's capacity to respond. The severe storm event has not only threatened critical infrastructure but also jeopardized the health and safety of the affected population.

9. Description of the nature and amount of State and local or Indian tribal government resources which have been or will be committed. Include additional details in enclosed Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's cover letter.

In response to the December 8, 2025 atmospheric river and wind event that caused widespread flooding across northwest Montana, the Montana State Emergency Coordination Center has been activated to lead and support emergency operations. All available State and local resources have been mobilized, including a Type III All-Hazard Incident Management Team, technical experts, and emergency contracting for critical services. In anticipation of a Do Not Consume Order, bottled water distribution is being coordinated in case of public water system failure. Agencies actively engaged in the response include the Montana Department of Military Affairs, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Transportation, Department of Administration, Department of Public Health and Human Services, and the American Red Cross. Federal support has also been initiated through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Public Law 84-99 for flood-fighting efforts.

10. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment*

☐ Individual Assistance Dates Performed Requested Start End

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

☒ Public Assistance Dates Performed Requested 12/15/2025 Start Dec 16, 2025 End

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).

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

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.

Category A and B for Lincoln County, Sanders County, and the Blackfeet Tribe.

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

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.

Request for Direct Federal Assistance

☐ I do not request direct Federal assistance at this time.

☒ 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:
Support the City of Libby following the failure of the Lower Flower Creek Dam, the city's sole water source, which was severely damaged. Federal assistance is needed to support emergency water distribution and treatment efforts to ensure continued access to safe drinking water. Technical and engineering assistance is also required to assess and stabilize the damaged dam and plan for permanent repairs to restore long-term water system functionality and reliability.

b. List of reasons why State and local or Indian tribal government cannot perform, or contract for, required work and services.
The severe storm and flooding event has overwhelmed State and local capabilities. The City of Libby faces an immediate threat to public health due to severe damage to the Lower Flower Creek Dam, its sole water source. Emergency actions have been taken, but the City lacks the technical capacity, resources, and funding to fully restore water distribution or repair the damaged dam. Federal assistance is urgently needed to stabilize infrastructure and ensure continued access to safe drinking water.

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).

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 September 28, 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 AgenciesPlease see **Enclosure C**: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs for additional information in support of this request*.

14. Findings and Certifications

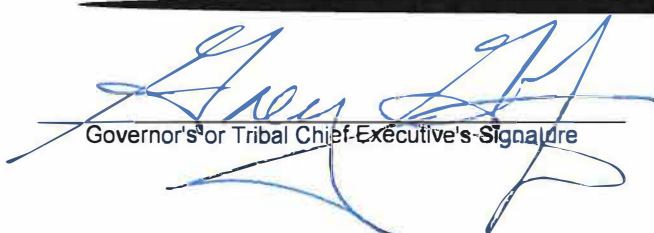
☒ I certify the following:

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 December 8, 2025 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 _____


Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's Signature

12/16/2025

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