

Massachusetts – Severe Winter Storm and Snowstorm FEMA-1959-DR

Declared March 7, 2011

On February 24, 2011, Governor Deval L. Patrick requested a major disaster declaration due to a severe winter storm and record snowstorm during the period of January 11-12, 2011. The Governor requested a declaration for Public Assistance (Categories A and B), including snow assistance for eight counties and Hazard Mitigation for all counties. During the period of February 8-11, 2011, joint Federal, Commonwealth, and local Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted in the requested counties and are summarized below. PDAs estimate damages immediately after an event and are considered, along with several other factors, in determining whether a disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the Commonwealth and the affected local governments, and that Federal assistance is necessary.¹

On March 7, 2011, President Obama declared that a major disaster exists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This declaration made Public Assistance requested by the Governor available to the Commonwealth and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe winter storm and snowstorm in Berkshire, Essex, Hampshire, Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk Counties for debris removal and emergency protective measures (Categories A and B) under the Public Assistance program. This declaration also authorized emergency protective measures (Category B), including snow assistance in Essex, Hampshire, Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk. The assistance for Berkshire County will be provided for a period of 72 hours. Finally, this declaration made Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance requested by the Governor available for hazard mitigation measures for all counties.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance - (*Not requested*)

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ -
 - Destroyed - -
 - Major Damage - -
 - Minor Damage - -
 - Affected - -

- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ -
- Percentage of low income households:⁵ -
- Percentage of elderly households:⁶ -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: N/A

Public Assistance

- Primary Impact: Emergency protective measures
- Total Public Assistance cost estimate: \$14,945,502
- Statewide per capita impact:⁷ \$2.36
- Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.30
- Countywide per capita impact: Berkshire County (\$4.96), Essex County (\$3.85), Hampshire County (\$3.85), Middlesex County (\$3.39), Norfolk County (\$4.02), Suffolk County (\$4.82)
- Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$3.27

¹ The preliminary damage assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor’s request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor’s request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor’s request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA’s regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(5)).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁶ Ibid (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2000 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY11, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2010.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY11, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2010.