



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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July 24, 2015

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20502-0001

Through: Gracia B. Szczech  
Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region IV  
3003 Chamblee-Tucker Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

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), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the Commonwealth of Kentucky as a result of a severe weather system commencing on July 11, 2015, and continuing through July 20, 2015. This system produced prolonged episodes of heavy rain, strong winds, hail, and isolated tornadoes which caused flooding, flash flooding, landslides, and mudslides. The impact of this weather has severely affected a large portion of the Commonwealth. **See Attachment 1 - NWS Summary**

**Deaths or Injuries**

Across the state search and swift water rescue efforts successfully saved numerous citizens who were trapped in vehicles and clinging to trees and debris, while others were evacuated from homes where water levels had forced residents into their attics or onto rooftops.

Sadly, there were four (4) fatalities caused by this event. These deaths are attributed to a flash flood which destroyed the mountain community of Flat Gap in Johnson County where four (4) inches of rain was reported to have fallen in just one (1) hour.

**Assistance from Voluntary Agencies**

The search and rescue efforts in Johnson County were extensive and continued for five (5) days. There were 41 searchers representing the local sheriff, Kentucky State Police, and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, and 53 Kentucky National Guardsmen. There were six (6) volunteer canine teams from Kentucky Search Dogs, Grand Paws, Commonwealth Canine, Ohio Valley Search and Rescue, Bloodhound SAR, and CSI of Kentucky that were comprised of 27 handlers and 30 canines.

The work and efforts of voluntary organizations are playing a vital role in dealing with the wide variety of challenges facing the counties impacted by this event. Beginning on July 14, 2015, the Kentucky Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (KYVOAD) conducted daily coordinating calls to identify needs and response resources. There have been 29 organizations participating on these calls; 14 of which are Kentucky-based and have committed to provide support for an extended period of time.

The organizations actively engaged in the impacted areas are: National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), All Hands Volunteers, The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Church World Service, Team Rubicon, Kentucky Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, Catholic Charities, Kentucky Community Crisis Response Team, Kentucky Methodist Annual Conference, Sheepdog Disaster Impact Assistance, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Christian Appalachian Project, Samaritan's Purse, Church of Latter Day Saints, and Christian Aid Ministries.

The primary work is being accomplished in Johnson County with other significant efforts in Rowan, Carter, and Trimble counties. Groups are providing an array of assistance including sheltering, feeding, volunteer and donations management, clearing of debris, and counseling. Examples include:

**The American Red Cross (ARC)** has been active in the counties of Breathitt, Carroll, Carter, Fleming, Henry, Jefferson, Johnson, Knott, Lawrence, Montgomery, Morgan, Perry, Rowan, Spencer, Trimble, and Wolfe. There have been 145 persons (126 being volunteers) deployed by ARC into the impacted areas. ARC has provided sheltering, feeding, bulk distribution, client casework, disaster mental health and health support, and assistance with recovery planning. It is anticipated that all ARC activities will transition to the local Red Cross on or about July 27, 2015.

**The Kentucky Community Crisis Response Team (KCCRT)** provided psychological first aid in Johnson County from July 15 through July 19, 2015. During that time, volunteers provided counseling, wellness checks, and referred citizens for tetanus shots and to local donation centers. The efforts of KCCRT were coordinated with Mountain Comprehensive Care and Riverside Crisis Counseling centers.

**The National Civilian community Corps (NCCC) - River 2** has teamed with the Christian Appalachian Project. Nine (9) members, who are specialists in construction and demolition, are assisting with mucking, gutting, and volunteer organizing.

Kentucky Emergency Management's Volunteer Coordinator is assisting the Johnson County Long Term Recovery Committee, which has already held several meetings to identify needs and to map strategies to address those needs. The KYEM Volunteer Coordinator also provided support to the county to ensure a coordinated response to spontaneous volunteers and the outpouring of donations. Donation management centers opened immediately, continue to operate, and are well manned with local volunteers.

### **States of Emergency**

Due to the severity of this event, I issued an Executive Order declaring a State of Emergency for all of Kentucky on July 13, 2015. The Commonwealth's Emergency Operations Plan and the Commonwealth Emergency Operations Center were activated on 13, 2015, as authorized by Kentucky Revised Statute 39A.240.

In addition to the State of Emergency, on July 13, 2015, I issued an order prohibiting price gouging and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet issued an official order which suspended the registration requirement and exempted hours of service and stoppage at weigh stations for utility repair vehicles from other states. **See Attachment 2 – Emergency Orders**

The Commonwealth's State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Frankfort operated at an expanded Level 4 beginning July 13, 2015. Continuing through July 22, 2015, the SEOC monitored and responded to this event at various levels of activation. Significant response and EOC support efforts were made by the Kentucky National Guard, Kentucky Division of Water, Kentucky State Police, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, and the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

There were 30 counties and 11 cities that issued local states of emergency. **See Attachment 3 - Map of Local States of Emergency**

### **Disaster Event Damages**

Governmental services, for the most part, continued to function. The most dramatic impacts of this event were to individuals and households, power systems, water distribution capabilities, and transportation infrastructure.

The storms caused falling limbs, trees, and flooding. Because the ground was far more saturated than normal, strong winds were able to topple entire mature trees across power lines causing not just line damage but broken poles as well. The resulting power outages affected more than 77,000 citizens, with some pockets still without electricity. **See Attachment 4 – Power Outages**

Numerous counties have lost roadways, bridges, and associated structures. Detours were required in many areas, causing additional travel time and miles for thousands of motorists. Several water control systems were compromised by the record water levels and power outages. In some areas, water distribution lines were washed away by the velocity of the rain runoff which created severe erosion. Kentucky Emergency Management distributed 25 pallets of water into two (2) counties. Additionally, two (2) waste treatment systems were severely damaged.

The majority of Kentucky has received historic rainfall during the month of July. As of July 18, 2015, this July is the eighth wettest on record with more rain forecasted to occur before the end of the month. Many watersheds and reservoirs are at capacity. Lake Cumberland, a 102 square-mile manmade reservoir in south central Kentucky, is currently at the highest water level ever recorded for the month of July.

Additionally, the effects of this weather event are threatening Kentucky's major cash crops: corn and soybeans. Because of the February, March and April storms, there was a late planting of many crops. According to agriculture specialists, now field activities have been hampered due to constant rain. The ground is saturated in many areas and some crops have been destroyed, as fields are under water. The later-planted crops are showing effects of too much water. Soybean crops are also being threatened by weeds that are proliferating in the wet conditions. Forage crops, such as alfalfa, are in need of harvesting but wet conditions are preventing field activity. As these hays over mature, the quality deteriorates.

### **Preliminary Damage Assessments**

Because of the extended period of time that portions of the impacted area were inaccessible and the ongoing efforts to locate survivors and deceased, Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments for Individual Assistance were not requested until July 16, 2015, and began on July 18, 2015.

To date, Individuals and Households Assistance Joint Damage Assessments have been conducted in the counties of Carter, Johnson, Rowan, and Trimble. There are 12 other counties that have reported damages to homes and residences; however, the numbers were not enough to warrant joint assessments.

There are many reports of extensive debris, emergency protective measures, and damages to infrastructure which necessitate the need for Public Assistance Joint Damage Assessments. Given the loss of life and the sizeable number of citizens impacted by this event, the Commonwealth felt it was important to first focus on the needs of individuals and households before addressing other damages. A request was submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency on July 22, 2015, to conduct Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments in 12 counties. It is anticipated that those assessments will begin on Monday, July 27, 2015, and more counties will be requested as additional initial assessments are received.

### **State and Local Disaster Responses**

Response activities at the local levels were extensive and sustained. As previously noted, local states of emergency were declared by 11 cities and 30 of Kentucky's 120 counties. Flooded homes and roadways caused the need for many evacuations and rescues. Volunteer search and rescue teams, fire departments, and law enforcement officers were deployed to rescue many stranded residents and motorists.

The State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) and local Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) were activated to coordinate response efforts. Various Emergency Support Function personnel provided assistance to the SEOC and volunteers assisted at some local EOCs during peak periods. The Division of Water provided guidance and support to water systems that experienced production difficulties. The Environmental Protection Cabinet provided much needed assistance to deal with the handling and disposal of hazardous materials and waste.

Numerous emergency professionals from Kentucky Emergency Management and neighboring counties were deployed into Johnson County to assist with the coordination of response, search, and rescue efforts. A complement of 50 National Guardsmen and equipment were deployed to Johnson County to assist with communications and search and rescue activities. The National Guard also provided support to the Kentucky State Police (Ashland Post) to ensure that the impacted area was secure from looters and unauthorized individuals seeking access.

Citizen safety was threatened by the condition of roadways throughout the event. Roads flooded and landslides occurred. State and local road crews worked tirelessly to identify and barricade flooded roads, clear debris from roadways, establish detours, and make emergency repairs.

Both at the state and local level, social media played a prominent role in keeping citizens apprised of current weather and road conditions, forecasts, and warnings. In many counties, amateur radio operators again provided real-time local weather conditions reporting.

#### **Disaster History of Impacted Areas for the Previous 12 Months**

The year 2015, has been extremely difficult for Kentucky and its citizens. During 2015, Kentucky has already received three (3) Presidential Major Disaster Declarations to assist with the recovery from severe weather events which occurred in February, March, and April.

In April 2015, a severe storm impacted Kentucky with rain, tornadoes, flooding, landslides and mudslides impacting 71 counties and 2.6 million citizens. Damages and costs for this event will exceed \$8 million. In addition to emergency measures and infrastructure damages, there were 10 counties in which individuals and households experienced significant damages. To date, FEMA has distributed almost \$4 million in assistance to impacted citizens. Major Disaster DR-4217 was declared for this event for both Public Assistance and Individuals and Households Assistance.

In March 2015, another severe winter storm impacted most of Kentucky. There were record snowfalls, bitter arctic temperatures, flooding, and flash flooding in 30 counties and impacting 1.4 million Kentuckians. Damages and costs for this event as reported by the declared counties and state agencies is in excess of \$27.5 million. Major Disaster DR-4128 was declared for this event for Public Assistance.

In February 2015, there was a severe winter storm containing record snowfalls, flooding, flash floods, and bitter arctic temperatures which impacted the 59 counties and 2 million citizens of the Commonwealth. The amount of damages and costs reported by the affected counties and state agencies is in excess of \$29 million. Major Disaster DR-4216 was declared for this event for Public Assistance.

In August of 2014, southeastern Kentucky was severely impacted by floods, flash floods, landslides, and mudslides. Damages from the event impacted state, federal, and local roads and bridges. Critical facilities such as utilities, schools, and water, drainage and sewer systems were severely damaged. As a result, Major Disaster DR-4196 was declared for Public Assistance in the impacted counties of Floyd, Johnson, Knott, and Pike. Unfortunately, even though there were significant damages to residences, Individuals and Households Assistance was denied in these counties, even upon appeal. The Small Business Administration did designate Floyd County as a disaster area, thus allowing program access to loan-eligible impacted citizens in Floyd and the contiguous counties.

In addition to the declared disasters in 2014 and 2015, Kentucky has experienced numerous localized severe-weather events over the past 12 months. On July 3, 2015, McCracken County Kentucky was inundated with a rain event which dropped five (5) inches in less than an hour. Impacts to homes and business was so severe that Kentucky has requested a Small Business Administration disaster declaration for the county. Also, over the past 24 months, all but 29 of Kentucky's 120 counties have experienced wildfires. Fire suppression costs have exceeded \$1 million and the value of lost timber is more than \$16 million. Though these events did not rise to the level of declared disasters, extensive costs were incurred to state and local governments in the response to the events and recovery from the damages.

### **Level of Insurance Coverage** **Insurance Coverage of Citizens**

The overwhelming majority of the identified, potential eligible individuals and households do not have insurance coverage for their lost homes and personal effects. In the impacted areas, as evidenced by the enclosed socioeconomic data, citizens are impoverished and many cannot afford coverage. **Attachment 5 – Socioeconomic Data**

### **Conclusion**

In regards to the Individuals and Households Assistance Program, as is often the case in flooding events, the most severely impacted counties and citizens are those with the fewest resources to recover from these types of events. The counties being requested for assistance, are faced with numerous socioeconomic challenges. Once the coal industry was the mainstay of the economy in Appalachia; however, this industry has faced a serious decline over the past five (5) years. Unemployment in many of these counties greatly exceeds the national average. The percentage of persons living below the poverty level and the percentage of disabled citizens in a number of counties is twice the national average.

For the most part, affluent citizens are not living in flood-prone areas, they have insurance and would not need assistance. The impacted citizens in these counties being requested for Individual Assistance need help. They had precious little before this event; now many have nothing. The socioeconomic data provided clearly truly reflects the need of the citizens. There is no state program which can provide funding to these citizens.

THE HONORABLE BARACK H. OBAMA  
July 24, 2015  
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In making your decision regarding this declaration request, I ask that you consider the enormous circumstances facing the Commonwealth. As mentioned previously, in addition to this event, in 2015, the Commonwealth has been horribly damaged by three (3) other disasters. The costs and damages as reported by the counties for those events exceed \$56 million.

Due to the severity of this event, I request a Major Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance for the counties of Carter, Johnson, Rowan, and Trimble. I request the implementation of the full Individuals and Households Assistance Program including the Crisis Counseling Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Legal Services, and the Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven L. Beshear". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Beshear" clearly distinguishable.

Steven L. Beshear

Enclosures:

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

A: Individual Assistance

C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

Attachment 1: National Weather Service Event Summary

Attachment 2: Emergency Orders, States of Emergency, and Local Declaration  
Summary Map

Attachment 3: Power Outage Map

Attachment 4: Damage Photographs and News Reports

Attachment 5: Socioeconomic Data

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

OMB No. 1660-0009 Expires March 31, 2016

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION  
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

1. Request Date July 24, 2015

**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. Commonwealth of Kentucky	2b. Population (as reported by 2010 Census) or estimated population of Indian tribal government's damaged area(s). 4,339,367
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3. Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's Name Steven L. Beshear	4. Designation of State or Tribal Coordinating Officer upon declaration (if available) and phone number Michael E. Dossett 502-607-1827
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5. Designation of Governor's Authorized Representative or Tribal Chief Executive Representative upon declaration (if available) and phone number  
Michael E. Dossett 502-607-1827

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

7. Incident Period: Beginning Date Jul 11, 2015 End Date Jul 20, 2015 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 (rain, high water, wind-driven rain, hail, lightning)  Snowstorm (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.  
The worst effects of this event were in the counties of Johnson and Rowan. In Johnson County (population 23,356), the community of Flat Gap was destroyed and 4 persons were killed in flash flooding. In Rowan County (population 23,333), multiple rounds of torrential rain caused flooding which severely damaged and destroyed many homes. There are 30 counties and 11 cities that declared local states of emergency in response to this event. Numerous electrical systems were damaged, leaving more than 70,000 citizens without power for extended periods of time. Several water distribution systems and purification systems were rendered inoperable. Roadways were lost and damaged due to flooding, landslides, and mudslides

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.  
The State Emergency Operations Center and local emergency operation centers were activated. A command center was established in Johnson County and supported by Kentucky Emergency Management, Kentucky State Police, Kentucky National Guard, and local resources. The Kentucky National Guard and the Kentucky Civil Air Patrol provided aerial imaging of the impacted areas. Kentucky Emergency Management's Volunteer Coordinator is organizing the activities of 29 state and national volunteer organizations which have been providing assistance to citizens impacted by flooding. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet assisted with establishing detours, making repairs, and clearing roadway debris. Kentucky Emergency Management distributed drinking water to the counties of Rockcastle and Rowan in response to failed water systems.

10. Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment\*

Individual Assistance      Dates Performed      Requested Jul 16, 2015      Start Jul 18, 2015      End Jul 23, 2015

Individual Assistance Accessibility Problems (Areas that could not be accessed, and why)  
 Due to prolonged search and rescue efforts, assessments could not begin until after the all victims were located.

Public Assistance      Dates Performed      Requested Jul 22, 2015      Start Jul 27, 2015      End unknown

Public Assistance Accessibility Problems (Areas that could not be accessed, and why)  
 The Commonwealth requested that JPDAs begin on July 27, 2015. Currently there are 12 counties that have reported damages in excess of threshold, with 18 more counties and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet still conducting initial assessments. The Commonwealth is confident that the state threshold has been met.

11. Programs and Areas Requested

Individual Assistance     N/A     Individuals and Households Program     Crisis Counseling Program     Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program  
 All     Disaster Case Management     Disaster Legal Services

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).

Carter County  
 Johnson County  
 Rowan County  
 Trimble County

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

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.

The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments will begin on July 27, 2015.

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

N/A

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:

b. List of reasons why State and local or Indian tribal government cannot perform, or contract for, required work and services.

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 October 2018 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 Agencies

Please 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:

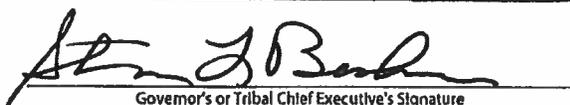
a. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local government or Indian tribal government and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary.

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 Jul 13, 2015 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 Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

  
Governor's or Tribal Chief Executive's Signature

July 24, 2015  
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