



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Governor Blagojevich again seeks response from President Bush on federal disaster assistance for southern Illinois areas affected by flooding

More than 200 homes destroyed or damaged by March floods

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today sent a letter to President Bush urging action on his requests for federal assistance to help hundreds of southern Illinois residents and local governments in 21 counties recover from devastating floods in March. Those requests for assistance were submitted in late May, and to date the state of Illinois hasn't received any indication if they have been approved or denied. The Governor followed up on those requests in a letter to the President on June 24, in which he sought information on the status of those requests as well as a request for federal assistance related to June flooding in several parts of the state.

“While I greatly appreciate the efforts of FEMA in delivering the needed federal assistance to people following several other disasters in Illinois over the past year, the people in southern Illinois who are most in need of disaster assistance that can only be provided by FEMA continue to wait,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Our state is still waiting for a response to the appeal and request that I made nearly three months ago. I urge the President to take action on these requests so that the people of southern Illinois can finally know what they may expect.”

On May 23, Governor Blagojevich appealed the federal government's denial of the state's request for a major disaster declaration to help people and businesses in 15 counties recover from flood damage to their homes. Additional damage information submitted with that appeal showed that more than 200 homes in 15 southern Illinois counties were destroyed or sustained major damage as a result of widespread flooding in the region.

Counties included in the appeal for federal assistance include Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White and Williamson. A federal disaster declaration would enable affected people in the area to apply for grants and loans to help with storm-related losses, while businesses would be eligible to apply for low-interest loans.

On May 27, the Governor submitted a separate request for federal assistance to help local governments in 21 southern Illinois counties recoup some expenses related to the March floods, including costs for response and recovery efforts, as well as repair or replacement of public property. An assessment of the flood's impact on southern Illinois units of local government conducted by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in May documented flood-related expenses totaling more than \$12 million.

Counties included in the Governor's request for federal assistance to local governments are Alexander, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Johnson, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Richland, Saline, Union, Wayne, White and Williamson.

Nearly a month later, while the state and local governments were involved in fighting the fifth disastrous flood in less than a year in Illinois, Governor Blagojevich on June 24 submitted a letter seeking information on his requests for federal disaster assistance to aid the people and local governments in southern Illinois. While the federal government did approve assistance for people and local governments in more than a dozen counties for the June flooding, no word on the requests related to the March flooding in southern Illinois has been received by the state to date.

Dear Mr. President:

As a result of severe storms and flooding that began on March 17, 2008, and continued for weeks thereafter, hundreds of people in 15 Southern Illinois counties are awaiting federal disaster assistance to aid in their recovery. There were over 200 homes that were destroyed or sustained major damage as a result of the disaster. There was also extensive damage to the public infrastructure and extraordinary costs incurred by local governments for debris removal in 21 counties. The cost to the State and local governments was estimated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to exceed \$12 million. In addition to requesting Individual Assistance and Public Assistance, I included a request for Hazard Mitigation Assistance in all counties statewide to implement projects to reduce future flood damage.

On May 23, 2008, I appealed the denial of my April 8, 2008, request for a major disaster declaration for Individual Assistance to aid the disaster stricken people in the 15 county disaster areas. To date, I have not received a reply on my appeal and the people in need of federal disaster assistance continue to wait.

On May 27, 2008, I submitted an addendum to appeal that requested a major disaster declaration for Public Assistance to aid the local governments in 21 counties affected by the disaster. To date, I have not received a reply to my initial request for Public Assistance and the local governments continue to wait.

On June 24, 2008, while State agencies and local governments were involved in fighting the fifth disastrous flood in less than one year to impact the State of Illinois, I submitted a letter through FEMA seeking information on the status of my requests for federal disaster assistance to aid the people and local governments in Southern Illinois. To date, I have not received a reply to the status of my pending requests for federal assistance.

I appreciate the efforts of FEMA in delivering the needed federal assistance to the people in Northern Illinois after the early August 2007 flood; in Northeast Illinois after the late August flood, in Central Illinois after the January 2008 flood; in Southeast Illinois after the June 2008 flood and in Western Illinois along the Mississippi River after the July 2008 flood. However, the people in Southern Illinois who are most in need of flood disaster assistance that can only be provided by FEMA continue to wait.

It is important that the needs of the all the people in Illinois be met following a major disaster. Please provide information related to the status of my pending requests for disaster assistance so that I may inform the people and local government officials in Southern Illinois of what they may expect.

Sincerely,

*Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor*