



State of Mississippi

TATE REEVES
Governor

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER**

May 19, 2026

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

Through: Mr. Robert Ashe
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region IV
3005 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), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that you issue a major disaster declaration for the State of Mississippi as a result of severe storms producing strong tornadoes, flash flooding, hail, and straight-line winds between May 6-7, 2026.

The State of Mississippi's request is intended to support our response to and recovery from the scale and impact of ripping tornadoes and wash-away flooding, which exceeds the capabilities and available resources of volunteer and non-governmental organizations, municipal and county governments, the State of Mississippi, and affected survivors. For these reasons, we request activation of FEMA's disaster programs to supplement public safety-related, critical, and life-safety recovery assistance.

On May 6, 2026, the National Weather Service (NWS) warned of a storm system that would impact the entire State with the major impacts forecasted for central and southern Mississippi that were placed at an Enhanced Risk of severe thunderstorms, wind damage, heavy rainfall, and strong tornadoes. A tornado watch was issued for 43 of Mississippi's 82 counties.

From May 6th to May 7th, Mississippi experienced seven (7) tornadoes ranging from EF-0 to EF-3. Approximately 21,333 acres were struck, tossing debris 23,000 feet into the air, flattening a large portion of the Homochitto National Forrest, decimating multiple mobile home parks, injuring and hospitalizing approximately 26 individuals, knocking out the power to over 18,000

meters, and ultimately damaging 425 homes, 23 businesses, and 10 farms. Over 100 individuals in multiple counties remain displaced and without long-term housing options.

Preparation, Response and Recovery Actions

In preparation to respond rapidly to the storm and to address the potential needs of our residents and jurisdictions, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) issued an Administrative Order on May 6, 2026, which allowed the agency to move state assets as requested once the storm passed, including tarps, oil, and mobile health and DMV units. Mississippi's state and local governments, volunteer organizations, and electrical cooperatives coordinated to respond in a manner to save both life and property.

Mississippi's State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) has been activated since January when the State was hit by a historic ice storm that impacted 75% of the State. A vast majority of MEMA's personnel are deployed in Mississippi's northern counties managing recovery efforts and the Disaster Recovery Centers and Disaster Survivor Assistance Centers. To respond to these tornadoes on the opposite side of the State, MEMA leveraged state agencies including the Mississippi Department of Health, the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, and the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

The Mississippi Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) and MEMA's Business Emergency Operations Center (BEOC) partner capabilities are strained due to the ongoing widespread disaster engagement in north Mississippi and neighboring states. However, identified deployed resources have included immediate needs, tarps, debris cleanup, sheltering, property security, fundraiser fraud monitoring, etc. from the following partners:

- The American Red Cross (ARC)
- Samaritan's Purse
- Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief
- Team Rubicon
- Cajun Navy
- GoFundMe
- Lowes
- Love Without Walls
- Pinelake Church
- St. Andrews Mission

While volunteer and nongovernmental organization (NGO) assistance has been vital in supporting the recovery for residents and businesses in impacted areas, most of those entities have depleted their resources from their continued recovery efforts in North Mississippi.

In the aftermath of this storm system and after the assessment of severe damage in multiple communities across the State, I declared a State of Emergency on May 19, 2026. Damage

assessments began by local governments and state partners immediately following the storm, and MEMA also requested joint damage assessments with FEMA and SBA, while the Mississippi State University Extension Service conducted agricultural damage assessments and the Mississippi Forestry Commission assessed damage to the Homochitto National Forest.

Impacts on Local Governments and Electrical Cooperatives

FEMA has completed its damage assessment validations. The total damage at this time excluding damages for Electrical Cooperatives is \$5,680,700. The estimated damages for the Electrical Cooperatives are \$10,000,000. The Mississippi Forestry Commission is reporting over \$6,000,000 in damage to the Homochitto National Forest, which limits its ability to assist the State with other debris removal.

Impacts to High Poverty and Vulnerable Communities

At this time, FEMA has completed its individual assistance damage validations and provided narratives for the affected counties. The table below breaks down the housing damages.

Counties	Destroyed	Major	Minor	Affected	Total
Lincoln	68	70	87	56	281
Franklin	3	5	12	3	23
Lamar	11	32	34	25	102
Lawrence	6	3	4	1	14
Wilkinson	0	2	3	0	5
Total	88	112	140	85	425

The following table presents indicators demonstrating that many affected counties face pre-existing socioeconomic challenges that increase disaster vulnerability and impede recovery without supplemental federal support. The table further identifies economically distressed counties that face persistent economic challenges, including elevated unemployment, lower median household incomes, reduced tax bases, and constrained local government resources. These structural conditions limit both household recovery capacity and the county’s ability to fund large-scale recovery operations.

Table 1: County Demographics

County (population)	% Elderly	% Disabled	Median Household Income	% Below Poverty	Economical Distress Level	% Per-disaster Unemployment
Franklin (7,675)	21.1%	22.5%	\$45,618	23.3%	Distressed	5.5%
Lamar (66,734)	16.8%	16.0%	\$80,686	16.1%	Comfortable	5.6%

Lawrence (12,016)	18.1%	28.2%	\$43,368	23.8%	Distressed	5.5%
Lincoln (34,907)	17.3%	15.2%	\$48,316	21.3%	Distressed	4.2%
Wilkinson (8,587)	21.6%	15.4%	\$40,250	28.2%	Distressed	4.7%

Many households experienced food loss due to power outages. Additionally, participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves as a strong proxy for household financial vulnerability. The table below highlights the concentration of SNAP recipients within affected counties, providing insight into the number of residents who may lack the financial reserves to address emergency repairs, temporary housing, utility restoration, or disaster-related expenses.

County	SNAP Benefits: Number of Individuals	Caseload	Issuance Amounts
Franklin	727	423	120,369
Lamar	2,448	1,276	402,866
Lawrence	1,497	800	267,914
Lincoln	3,511	1,797	622,199
Wilkinson	2,119	1,106	368,865

Sources: USDA Food and Nutrition Service data map and U.S. Census

All obstacles to individual recovery are exacerbated by wage interruptions, as the area's large employers were significantly damaged by the storm.

State Actions

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 33-15-14, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) directs all response and recovery efforts in connection with this event. This incident was added to the ongoing response operations under state law and directed by the execution of Mississippi's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

Local emergency management agencies are handling many requests for critical assistance emanating from municipalities and counties, as needed, from the State when their resources are exhausted. However, Mississippi's extensive disaster/event history adds a layer of difficulty that is insurmountable for the State.

Disaster History in Mississippi

Since 2023, Mississippi has had five (5) Federally Declared Disasters impacting almost all 82 counties in the State. Below is a breakdown of those five (5) disasters.

FEMA 4697 – Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, and Tornadoes. A Major Disaster for Individual and Public Assistance was declared on March 26, 2023, for seven (7) counties: Carroll, Humphreys, Monroe, Montgomery, Panola, Sharkey, and Washington. The devastation of this

disaster was so vast that it required the first Housing Mission for the State since Hurricane Katrina. The cost of debris removal alone exceeded \$20 million. Forty-nine entities submitted Requests for Public Assistance, and projects are still ongoing.

FEMA 4727 - Two EF-1 tornadoes moved through the western portion of the State killing one citizen in Madison County on June 16, 2023. Storms continued June 17–19, 2023. These storms produced destructive straight-line winds with speeds recorded between 70-100 miles per hour (mph). An EF-3 tornado touched down on June 18, 2023, at 11:30 p.m. in the city of Louin in Jasper County causing one (1) fatality and eighteen (18) injuries. The tornado continued moving south during the early morning hours of June 19 as an EF-2 tornado, touching down in Moss Point in Jackson County with peak winds of 130 mph, covering a 2.14-mile path 300 yards wide. The tornado lasted six minutes, injured six (6) people, and caused a significant amount of damage to the city and its infrastructure. Thirty (30) entities submitted requests for Public Assistance with fifty-one (51) projects totaling over \$10 million.

FEMA 4790 - From April 8 to 11, 2024, Mississippi endured a devastating period of severe weather, as a potent atmospheric disturbance triggered a series of intense storms across the State. These storms, fueled by abundant moisture, instability, and wind shear, generated numerous supercell thunderstorms capable of producing damaging winds, large hail, flash flooding, and tornadoes. The most significant impacts occurred on April 9, when several tornadoes touched down in different parts of Mississippi, wreaking havoc on homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Nearly 190 homes were heavily damaged, with many more affected. The final assessment revealed that 25 homes had been destroyed, 83 sustained major damage, and 58 had minor damages. Additionally, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency determined that 98 more homes were impacted by the storms.

FEMA 4874 - The severe weather event from March 14-15, 2025, in Mississippi was a devastating storm system that impacted the entire State, causing widespread destruction across 23 counties. This multi-faceted event brought a potent mix of severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and heavy rainfall. The most destructive aspect of the storm was the tornadoes, which swept through several regions of Mississippi, causing extensive damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Eighteen (18) confirmed tornadoes, some of which were classified as strong EF-2, EF-3, and EF-4. Over 200 homes were destroyed, and countless others were severely damaged, displacing hundreds of residents and leaving entire neighborhoods in ruins. Seven (7) lives were lost, and 29 more people were injured.

Many of the counties impacted in FEMA 4874 are neighboring counties to the ones impacted by the storm subject to this request. As they are still recovering, many of them lack the resources to provide aid to their neighbors.

FEMA 4899- From January 23-27, 2026, Winter Storm Fern brought with it historical ice accumulation, prolonged subfreezing temperatures, and freezing rain. The storm began with excessive rainfall that turned to sleet as temperatures dropped to dangerous lows. Immediately after the ice fell, power outages rose, water systems shut down, trees snapped, power lines fell, and the temperature was not expected to rise above freezing for three days. Many northern counties received 1 to 4 inches of snow, which settled on the ice. Widespread ice accumulations ranging

from 0.1 to 1.8 inches were observed throughout the State. Prolonged sub-freezing temperatures allowed ice to persist beyond the end of the main weather event. While there were brief periods of temperatures above freezing, the melting and refreezing of ice severely impacted state infrastructure, including roads and utilities, and ice accumulation on vegetation hampered service restoration and recovery. Conditions caused 29 fatalities and mass infrastructure failures across 36 Mississippi counties and the Band of Choctaw Indians. MEMA’s staff, its state partners, and volunteer groups are actively performing recovery efforts in North Mississippi.

In addition to these five (5) Federally Declared Disasters, Mississippi has experienced 44 severe weather events of varying magnitudes, but most impacted multiple counties and required MEMA response through its field services staff and search and rescue partners. A list of those events is provided in the table below.

Dates	Type Event	Counties	Remarks
Jan 2-3, 2023	Severe Weather	3 Counties	Minor
January 18, 2023	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
Jan 30- Feb 2, 2023	Winter Weather	7 Counties	Significant
Feb 15-16, 2023	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
Mar 1-3, 2023	Severe Weather	6 Counties	Minor
March 12, 2023	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
March 26, 2023	Severe Weather	5 Counties	Significant
March 31, 2023	Severe Weather	5 Counties	Significant
June 10-11, 2023	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
June 25-26, 2023	Severe Weather	9 Counties	Minor
June 27, 2023	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
July 13, 2023	Flash Flooding	5 Counties	Minor
Aug 1-Nov 14, 2023	Wildfires	Statewide	Significant
September 6, 2023	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
Nov 20-21, 2023	Severe Weather	3 Counties	Minor
Dec 9-10, 2023	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
Jan 8-9, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
January 12, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
Jan 14-22, 2024	Winter Weather	22 Counties	Significant
Jan 23-26, 2024	Flash Flooding	4 Counties	Minor
Feb. 11, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
March 8-9, 2024	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
March 14-15, 2024	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
April 18-19, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
May 7-9, 2024	Severe Weather	5 Counties	Significant
May 9-10, 2024	Severe Weather	6 Counties	Significant
May 12-13, 2024	Severe Weather	12 Counties	Significant
May 16-17, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
May 22-24, 2024	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor

May 31-June 1, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
June 5, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
June 9, 2024	Severe Weather	1 County	Minor
Sep 10-13, 2024	Tropical Weather	17 Counties	Minor
Jan 5-6, 2025	Severe Weather	5 Counties	Minor
Jan 30-31, 2025	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
February 12, 2025	Severe Weather	2 Counties	Minor
March 30-31, 2025	Severe Weather	3 Counties	Minor
April 2-6, 2025	Severe Weather	23 Counties	Significant
May 16-18, 2025	Severe Weather	4 Counties	Minor
May 24-30, 2025	Severe Weather	9 Counties	Minor
Jun 6-9, 2025	Severe Weather	6 Counties	Minor
Oct 25-26, 2025	Severe Weather	3 Counties	Minor
March 11, 2026	Severe Weather	5 Counties	Minor
March 15-16, 2026	Severe Weather	3 Counties	Minor

Severity and Magnitude

Given these factors, the severity and magnitude of this disaster is such that effective response and recovery is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local governments. Federal assistance under the Stafford Act is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the State, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and compensation from insurance for disaster-related losses.

I am requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance for the following five (5) counties: Franklin, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, and Wilkinson. This request encompasses the Individuals and Households Program, Crisis Counseling, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster SNAP, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Legal Services, and Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance.

I am also requesting Public Assistance (Categories A-G) for the following five (5) counties: Franklin, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, and Wilkinson. This request includes support for sheltering and Direct Federal Assistance for those activities that the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency deems necessary. Additionally, I request the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program statewide.

The State of Mississippi has completed a Standard State Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is effective until 2028.

As additional damages are discovered and reported, this request may be amended to add additional counties for Individual Assistance or Public Assistance in the future.

As stated previously, the severity and magnitude of this event in combination with low personnel numbers and available resources that are strained by the ongoing recovery efforts for

Winter Storm Fern and other past disasters has exceeded the capabilities and resources of volunteer and non-governmental organizations, municipalities, county, and tribal governments, the State, and survivors, requiring activation of FEMA programs to supplement public safety-related, critical, life-essential, and life-safety recovery assistance.

I have designated MEMA Director Stephen C. McCraney as the Governor's Authorized Representative for this request. He will work with FEMA and may provide further information or justifications on my behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tate Reeves", written in a cursive style.

Tate Reeves
Governor

Enclosures

(A) Individual Assistance

(B) Public Assistance

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

Enclosure A

Counties	Destroyed	Major	Minor	Affected	Total
Lincoln	68	70	87	56	281
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Total	88	112	140	85	425

Enclosure B

County	Subrecipient	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C	Cat D	Cat E	Cat F	Cat G	Subtotal	County Pop.	Cost per Capita	% of Eligible	Applicants Pending
Franklin		\$ 164,037	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 164,037	7,675	\$ 21.37	2.90%	0
	Franklin	\$ 164,037	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 164,037				
Lamar		\$ 1,861,245	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,911,245	64,222	\$ 29.76	33.75%	0
	Lamar County	\$ 1,861,245	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,911,245				
Lawrence		\$ 1,328,323	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,328,323	12,016	\$ 110.55	23.46%	0
	Lawrence	\$ 1,328,323	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,328,323				
Lincoln		\$ 2,223,721	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,258,721	34,907	\$ 64.71	39.89%	0
	Lincoln County	\$ 2,223,721	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,258,721				
Wilkinson		\$ 18,374	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,374	8,587	\$ 2.14		0
	Wilkinson	\$ 18,374	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,374				
(blank)		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#N/A		0.00%	0
	(blank)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -				
Grand Total		\$ 5,595,700	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,680,700	2,961,279	\$ 1.92		0