



**RON DESANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

April 25, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Gracia B. Szczech, Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region IV  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
3005 Chamblee-Tucker Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

RE: Request for Major Disaster Declaration  
Broward County Flooding

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"), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you issue a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Florida due to the recent Broward County flooding and authorize and make available all categories of Individual Assistance and Public Assistance, including Hazard Mitigation. This request is timely under 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(a).

Based upon the significant damages received from the recent flooding in Broward County, Florida, I request a Major Disaster Declaration to include Public Assistance Category A (debris removal), Public Assistance Category B (emergency protective measures), Categories C-G (permanent work), and all available programs under Individual Assistance. I request that the incident period for this disaster begin on April 12, 2023.

**I. Flooding and Meteorological Impacts**

A slow-moving frontal boundary across South Florida, in combination with an organizing area of low pressure in the Gulf of Mexico, led to prolonged periods of very heavy rainfall across Southeast Florida beginning midday Wednesday, April 12 and lasting to midnight on Thursday, April 14. A Flood Watch was issued on Tuesday, April 11 and remained in effect until 2157 EDT Thursday, April 13. Abundant moisture and conducive atmospheric conditions over the Southern

Florida Peninsula allowed any shower or thunderstorm to produce intense rainfall rates for an extended period of time; 3-5 inch per hour rainfall rates were observed throughout the event.

On the evening of Wednesday, April 12, at 1958 EDT, the National Weather Service in Miami issued a Flash Flood Emergency for the areas of Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood, which was the first Flash Flood Emergency ever issued for Broward County. The heaviest rainfall was observed in Broward County, with 25.91 inches of rain measured at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

This 24-hour rainfall total measured at the airport was record-breaking, eclipsing the previous daily rainfall record of 14.59 inches set on April 25, 1979. The daily total from April 12-13 was over eight times the normal rainfall total for the month of April. Extremely high rainfall amounts in excess of 20 inches were noted near the neighborhoods south of the New River including Edgewood, Riverside Park, and Tarpon River, and an area of 15-20 inches of rainfall was observed from the Hollywood and Dania Beach areas and north to Fort Lauderdale. Pockets of deep standing water were observed across the impacted area, with a still high-water mark over three (3) feet of water measured on a building at Floyd Hull Stadium. Several streets and parks had standing water of 1-2 feet in Dania Beach and Hollywood.

In addition to the extensive flooding, the National Weather Service in Miami confirmed areas of damage were consistent with two (2) EF-0 tornadoes in Broward County. One (1) tornado in Dania Beach produced metal siding and roof damage through a mobile home park, and the second tornado caused tree damage near West Hollywood.

**II. Preliminary Damage Assessment Teams Were Utilized as a Mechanism to Determine the Impact and Magnitude of Damage and the Resulting Unmet Needs of Individuals, Businesses, the Public Sector, and the Community as a Whole – 44 C.F.R. § 206.33**

On April 17, 2023, the State of Florida formally requested Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (JPDA) Teams. These teams conducted physical assessments for both Individual Assistance and Public Assistance beginning April 19 and concluding April 21, 2023.

***Uninsured Home and Property Losses***

As of 1700 on April 21, 2023, the State and FEMA’s Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (JPDA) teams have identified the following number of homes with corresponding degrees of damage:

Affected	3
Minor	255
Major	1,095

The areas evaluated were identified through the local initial damage assessments performed in part by the City of Fort Lauderdale, which sustained the most significant impacts. Their initial data was based on citizens calling in to report damages to their home and included a total of 1,121 surveys completed, with 766 structures identified as sustaining major damage. Once JPDA teams

arrived on scene, it became quickly apparent that these initial reports were a small representation of the extensive damages sustained. The JPDA teams performed over 1,400 door-to-door assessments in a matter of three (3) days. Over 78% of these residences were categorized as sustaining major damage, which provides more than sufficient evidence of the need for Federal assistance and that the scope of impacts extends well beyond the initial data. Many residents had to be evacuated from floodwaters that reached waist-level, suffered injuries from attempting to protect medically dependent family members, and hundreds of homes have been contaminated with raw sewage, further exacerbating recovery efforts. FEMA's office of Floodplain Management has indicated that 2,385 National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) claims have been filed statewide as of April 21, 2023, with 2,350 of them being from Broward County residents.

### ***Impact to Community Infrastructure***

Within Broward County, there are at least 676 identified critical facilities. These facilities include both public and private infrastructure and serve a wide range of community needs for: emergency services, medical care, childcare, recreation, government function, mass transit, and utilities.

The impacted areas took days to fully dewater, despite having pumps constantly running. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) coordinated efforts with South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) on dewatering operations. As previously mentioned, this created health and safety hazards as water became stagnant, leading to several days of school closures, and impeding survivors from traveling safely throughout their communities. Several neighborhoods experienced compromised sewage infrastructures, causing backups that left hundreds of homes contaminated and roads inundated. With clean-up efforts ongoing, debris estimates continue to increase, and preliminary estimates reflect damages in excess of \$100 million for the local governments, schools, and airport.

Supporting documentation (including insurance policies and schedules, photos, etc.) are still being collected to support the PA JPDA operation. A summary of damages and costs captured from JPDA's with debris and emergency protective measures identified by the local applicants have been provided. This collective information is a sample of the largest damaged facilities identified by teams operating in Broward County and is not all encompassing but includes major critical infrastructure. Additional damaged facilities, costs, and supporting documentation are still filtering in, as they become available through the local jurisdictions that are still experiencing delays from their damaged infrastructure, as further noted below.

In the City of Fort Lauderdale alone, it has been reported that City Hall is a complete loss. This includes all equipment, numerous city vehicles, records management infrastructure, and information technology infrastructure. This has impacted the operations of the entire jurisdiction. With a population of over 180,000, the City of Fort Lauderdale will have to relocate these essential services via temporary facilities. This will prove to be a costly endeavor under a Category B project. The extent of damage to the structural integrity of some facilities is still being vetted, as

noted in the JPDA summary. Additionally, the city was still experiencing an unknown extent of impacts to their water/wastewater infrastructure at the time JPDA's were performed.

Furthermore, significant damage and water inundation were reported by the Broward Health Hospital System and will include considerable costs associated with utilities, electrical components, elevators, etc. This record-breaking rainfall has surpassed prior events and resulted in types of damage not previously experienced.

***Historic Event Comparison***

For reference, Hurricane Irma's 2017 landfall in southwest Florida saw a total of \$106,273,617 in Individuals and Households Program (IHP) assistance and \$79,726,700 in SBA assistance distributed for Broward County residents. Based on a combination of changing economic conditions, statewide increases in population, and assessed damages of this event, the State of Florida believes there is a great need for Federal aid. Consequently, the risk that a lightly impacted county would receive unnecessary Federal assistance is minimal, at best.

**III. The Situation is of Such Severity and Magnitude that Effective Response and Recovery is Beyond the Capability of the State and Affected Local Governments - 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(b)(1)**

***Disaster Impacted Population Profile***

Broward County is the second most populous county in Florida, with just under two million residents in 1,209 square miles. Housing in the disaster impacted area is dense, with the Florida Housing Coalition classifying it as the third most housing cost-burdened county in the state at 42.2%.

<b>Statewide Demographic Profile</b>						
<b>County</b>	<b>Total Population Estimate (July 2021)</b>	<b>Persons Under 18 years</b>	<b>Persons 65 years of Age or Older</b>	<b>Persons With a Disability &lt;65 years, Percent</b>	<b>Persons in Poverty, Percent</b>	<b>Estimated# of Mobile Homes</b>
Broward	1,944,375	410,180	2,354,555	11.0%	12.6%	23,112

As of January 2023, per the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), in Broward County there are:

- 149,740 households currently receiving Food Assistance;
- 407,056 Medicaid clients; and
- 1,876 households receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

According to the Social Security Administration’s Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OADSI) Beneficiaries report, as of December 2021 there are 339,605 persons in Broward County receiving supplemental income. The CDC/ATSDR’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for Broward County is classified as High, meaning that survivors are expected to face additional barriers and challenges to disaster recovery.

Overall SVI	0.7826
Socioeconomic Status	0.7934
Household Characteristics	0.5086
Racial and Ethnic Minority Status	0.944
Housing Type and Transportation	0.6614

***Additional Economic Factors Affecting Individuals and Families***

The Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport is a major public airport which averages over 700 flights a day to over 135 domestic and international gateways. The April 12<sup>th</sup> flooding caused extensive impacts to the airport itself and surrounding areas, leading to two (2) full days of closure which resulted in millions of dollars in lost revenue and disruption to individuals and families who rely on the airport’s operations.

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity conducted a Business Damage Assessment Survey to collect information on impacted businesses who suffered either structural or financial damages as a result of the flooding. Of the 326 businesses surveyed as of this request, 227 businesses reported suffering damage due to the flooding, and 226 reported lost revenue during the event. A total of 51 businesses also reported need to lay off workers, with 197 individuals being laid off temporarily and an additional 50 individuals being laid off permanently. The average reported damage is \$79,332.51.

Average consumer prices in the United States have risen 8.3% over the past year. This increase has not only affected the cost of household goods, but also rent and construction materials, which in Florida have increased exponentially above the Consumer Price Index, especially due to constraints on the construction sector due to Hurricanes Ian and Nicole.

**IV. Federal Assistance Under the Act Is Necessary to Supplement the Efforts and Available Resources of the State, Local Governments, Disaster Relief Organizations, and Compensation by Insurance for Disaster-Related Losses - 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(b)(2)**

The State of Florida is still actively engaged in recovery efforts for Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, which have heavily tasked state resources and limited the capacity to independently support a disaster of this magnitude within the same fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023). Due to the significant damage to residential property captured during the JPDAs, the State is requesting support to survivors through the Individual Assistance program to rapidly rehouse those displaced by the disaster, and to provide funding for clean-up and repair so that survivors can avoid negative physical and environmental health outcomes resulting from water-logged homes and damage to electrical systems.

Additionally, the JPDA teams documented significant impacts to infrastructure and public buildings in Broward County. This, coupled with necessary emergency protective measures by the county and state, as detailed below, necessitate all categories of Public Assistance, to ensure the county and its municipalities are able to quickly recover and continue providing vital services to the community.

Hurricane Ian alone is progressing to be one of the costliest disasters in history. State response efforts have relied heavily on cost-limited partnerships within the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) to address immediate issues such as dewatering via pumping operations, fuel shortages, law enforcement support, volunteers and donations coordination, and damage assessments.

**V. Confirmation That the Governor Has Taken Appropriate Action Under State Law and Directed the Execution of the State Emergency Plan - 44 C.F.R. §206.36(c)(1)**

On April 13, 2023, I issued Executive Order No. 23-65 which directed the State Coordinating Officer to execute the State's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act. I have directed the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center in response to the flooding and the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) is coordinating preparation and response measures across the State.

**VI. An Estimate of the Amount of Severity of Damages and Losses Stating the Impact of the Disaster on the Public and Private Sector - 44 CFR § 206.36(c)(2)**

As mentioned above, this event resulted in historic flooding in areas not ever before seen in Broward County. The extent of damages to homes, businesses, and infrastructure is still being determined through the various program areas. Additionally, this flood directly impacted citizens, first responders, medical facilities, etc., due to recovery efforts still ongoing for Hurricane Ian. Food, supplies, medicine, and other critical commodities were vulnerable to loss and cause a significant financial impact to individuals and households.

The areas evaluated were identified through the local initial damage assessments performed in part by the City of Fort Lauderdale, which sustained the most significant impacts. Their initial data was based on citizens calling in to report damages to their home and included a total of 1,121 surveys completed, with 766 structures identified as sustaining major damage. Once JPDA teams arrived on scene, it became quickly apparent that these initial reports were a small representation of the extensive damages sustained. The JPDA teams performed over 1,400 door-to-door assessments in a matter of three (3) days. Over 78% of these residences were categorized as sustaining major damage, which provides more than sufficient evidence of the need for Federal assistance and that the scope of impacts extends well beyond the initial data. Finally, an ongoing shortage of truck drivers has already been exacerbated by last year's major hurricane. A lack of freight transportation will hamper local economic activity and delay the delivery of recovery resources for the public and private sector.

## **VII. Nature and Amount of State and Local Resources Which Have Been or Will Be Committed to Alleviate the Results of the Disaster - 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(c)(3)**

State response efforts have relied heavily on cost-limited partnerships within the SERT to address immediate issues such as dewatering via pumping operations, fuel shortages, law enforcement support, volunteers and donations management, and damage assessments. Port Everglades supplies 100% of the fuel for this locale, which typically amounts to 13 million gallons per day. The floodwater caused the motors that operate the fuel pumps to be submerged, resulting in distribution being reduced by over 50% (7.5 million gallons/day), with interruptions lasting over 10 days. As of the date of this request, the SERT has undertaken the following actions to alleviate immediate dangers and impacts to the public:

- The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) activated emergency fuel contracts to supply 689,675 gallons of fuel to the impacted area to mitigate immediate fuel shortages as a result of impacts to ports.
- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) coordinated reopening the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and Port Everglades, which were both severely impacted by flooding.
- FDOT and the South Florida Water Management District are conducting emergency water removal through pumping.
- FDOT, the City of Hollywood, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are coordinating repairs to a private-owned seawall on U.S. 1.
- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) provided VAC trucks and is monitoring impacts to storm and wastewater facilities.
- The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) is supporting flooding response in Broward County and is providing security and escort to deployed resources.
- The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is supporting impacted businesses with a Business Recovery Center in the impacted area, which is also staffed by other state agencies. DEO has also activated the Emergency Bridge Loan Program to provide working capital to impacted businesses.

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, United Way, Team Rubicon, Samaritan's Purse, and others, in addition to the local Long Term Recovery Group, have mobilized to support individuals impacted by this event by providing sheltering, feeding, and muck and gut operations. The peak overnight shelter count for this event was 107 individuals.

Many of these same organizations also responded to Hurricanes Ian and Nicole and remain active in those recovery efforts, and as such, are experiencing similar resource limitations as the state. VOADs are typically the first groups to respond when disasters occur and the last ones to leave, and a Major Disaster Declaration would allow them to stretch their already limited donations and resources as far as possible so that they can remain engaged throughout the duration of the recovery process and assist those in the community who are most vulnerable.

**VIII. Preliminary Estimates of the Types and Amount of Supplementary Federal Disaster Assistance Needed Under the Stafford Act - 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(c)(4)**

The flooding in Broward County resulted in significant damage in concentrated areas. It is anticipated that the jurisdictions impacted will require assistance from other Federal Agency Programs, to include SBA Home Loans, SBA Business Loans, FSA Loans, and DSNAP. The extent of such need is undetermined at this time, given the scope and magnitude of the historic flooding event. All funding opportunities must be pursued for the successful response and recovery of these communities, as well as the significant economic impacts. As aforementioned, joint preliminary damage assessments rendered an estimated total of over \$100 million, far exceeding the per capita threshold for the entire State of Florida.

**IX. Certification by the Governor That State and Local Government Obligations and Expenditures for the Current Disaster Will Comply with All Applicable Cost Sharing Requirements of the Stafford Act 44 C.F.R. § 206.36(c)(5)**

Please see enclosure, FEMA Form 010-0-13.

**X. Conclusion**

I have designated Kevin Guthrie, Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, as the State Coordinating Officer for this emergency. He is authorized to provide any further information, assurances, requests, or justification on my behalf. I have designated Kevin Guthrie, Luke Strickland, and James Bujeda as Governor's Authorized Representatives.

Sincerely,



Ron DeSantis  
Governor

Enclosures:

FEMA Form 010-0-13

Executive Order 23-65