State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196
401-222-2080

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

GOVERNOR'S REQUEST
MAJOR DISASTER

March 24, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20500

Through: Mr. Paul Ford, Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region I
99 High Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA, 02110

Dear President Obama:

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 request that you declare a major disaster for Kent, Newport, Providence, and Washington Counties in the State of Rhode Island as a result of severe storms and flooding that were historic in nature during the time period of March 12th and continuing.

The State of Rhode Island experienced heavy rainfall and documented hurricane force gusts from March 12, 2010 through March 15, 2010 and even when the rain ceased, severe flooding continued along the Pawtuxet River through March 18, 2010. The National Weather Service held a regional conference call on Friday, March 12, 2010 to advise the region with specific warnings for Rhode Island that minor flooding may occur along the Pawtuxet River and preliminarily issued a flood watch and high wind watch. The most affected areas were Kent County, which received up to 3.68 inches, Providence Country, which received up to 5.71 inches, and Washington County, which received 5.55 inches of rain over that timeframe. Over the weekend the weather situation further deteriorated and unexpected rainfall totals caused the Pawtuxet River to go into major flood stage in the evening of March 14th. On March 15th the Pawtuxet River hit historic levels cresting at 14.98 feet. The previous record amount was 14.5 in 1982. Due to the historic flooding and hurricane like force winds caused by the heavy amounts of rainfall; households and businesses along the Pawtuxet River were severely damaged. Even as I write this letter, the State experienced more heavy rains that caused the Pawtuxet to flood again and exacerbated the problems for the region.

In response to the situation, I have taken appropriate action under State Law. On March 15, 2010, I directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan in accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act. I also directed the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center, which remains open. On March 15, 2010, I issued Executive Order 10-06, declaring a State of Disaster Emergency for the entire state.

The State of Rhode Island has an approved Standard Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Hazard Mitigation Plan was last updated and approved in April 2008 and maintained through the efforts of our State's Hazard Mitigation Officer.

On March 16, 2010, I requested a joint Federal, State, and local survey of the damaged areas. Preliminary assessments conducted from March 20, 2010 through March 23, 2010 indicated the most severe impacts were to households, businesses, debris clearing, emergency response operations, and state and local infrastructure such as roads and bridges. The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency worked with FEMA officials to analyze information gathered from the joint assessment, a process that was also completed on March 23, 2010.

The nation's economic recession has hit the State of Rhode Island particularly hard. Entering the recession earlier than its neighbors, Rhode Island continues to struggle with staggering unemployment rates, a depressed housing market, and shrinking state revenues. The state's unemployment rate has continued to outpace the rest of the nation and currently stands at 12.7 percent, with more than 73,000 Rhode Islanders out of work and struggling to pay bills. For the past three years, state revenues have declined by more than $500 million. For the current fiscal year, the state has a budget deficit of $220 million, with a deficit of more than $425 million for fiscal year 2011. To balance the budget there has been a significant reduction in state aid to cities and towns and state employees have taken a ten percent pay reduction.

The historic flooding on the Pawtuxet River had acute but catastrophic impact on the town of West Warwick. The Pawtuxet River inundated the Natick area of West Warwick, located in Kent County, with a population of 29,581. The flooding not only inundated a neighborhood of homes, but also numerous businesses, and the West Warwick Sewage Facility. This caused a sewer backup in numerous homes and an apartment complex making them uninhabitable. The West Warwick Fire Department worked around the clock to pump out homes; the town opened a shelter, sheltering the displaced individuals from West Warwick and surrounding cities and towns; and the Community Assistance Program set up a booth in the neighborhood to offer social services to the citizens.

West Warwick is designated as a "distressed community" by the State due to its high tax burden relative to the wealth of the taxpayers. West Warwick has one of the highest tax levies despite the low per capita income of its residents. Flooding along the Pawtuxet River had profound repercussions for the struggling business community of West Warwick's historic Natick Village. Flooding in this area affected 37 businesses, displaced 200 residents, led to the temporary unemployment of 112 employees, and caused $730,000 in lost revenue as well as untold damage to inventory. These businesses were in a struggle for survival before the flooding. Now many of them, such as Padula Brothers Salvage Yard -- a business that has been in continuous operation for 113 years -- will be forced to close their doors unless federal assistance is made available. Another resident, rents a unit in the apartment complex that was condemned, and his small restaurant nearby had to be closed due to flooding and he lost business for a week.

Health and safety are a concern for all flooded residents and businesses. The raw sewage raises obvious concerns and automatically made a home or business uninhabitable to minimize the health risks to the individuals. The flooding also causes mold spores to develop in the homes which can also create a health hazard if not addressed immediately. Homes were also affected by oil tanks that were dislodged which caused spillage and a hazardous materials situation. Local officials condemned/red-tagged more than 50 homes because of the health and safety of the individuals.

Across the remainder of Kent County, including the City of Warwick and the Towns of Coventry, East Greenwich, and West Greenwich, there was further devastation along the river's path as well as other bodies of water that were already swollen from previous storms. Local fire departments in Kent County pumped out a total of 171 homes, and the Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) identified 80 homes with major damage. Kent County had a total of 12,097 power outages. The City of Warwick, due to distressed conditions, had to move ahead with a planned furlough day on Monday, March 15, 2010, and services were interrupted for the citizens.

Providence County was also affected by the Pawtuxet River's flooding, particularly the City of Cranston, which has historically been flood-prone in the low-lying areas. Many of these homes have been repeatedly inundated from flooding from the river. Local fire departments in Providence County pumped out a total of 100 homes, and the Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) identified 17 homes with major damage. Providence County had a total of 3,772 power outages during the storm.

Most of the damage in Washington County was from rainfall, water runoff, and wind damage. Local fire departments in Washington County pumped out a total of 101 homes, and the Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) identified 8 homes with major damage. Washington County had a total of 9,090 power outages.

In other parts of the State, devastation also occurred in localized areas. In Newport County, four units of a group home are condemned due to a roof failure. The displaced residents all have special and functional needs based on their physical and mental challenges. The State's one destroyed home, also in Newport County, lost its entire roof due to wind damage.

There was one documented traffic fatality that published reports stated were as a result of the wet roads.

The Voluntary Organizations within Rhode Island have been heavily impacted by the economic situation in the state, and in particular to the high unemployment levels. They have experienced an increase in demand for their services and at the same time, a significant decrease in donations resulting in staff reductions and higher case loads. In spite of this, the volunteer response to the flooding in Rhode Island has been swift, and the services provided to the survivors of the disaster are ongoing.

FEMA conducted a Public Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment on March 22, 2010. The PDA teams visited damaged facilities and reviewed damage reports that were Statewide. This included debris clearing operations and emergency protective measures that were undertaken by the municipalities. Although there was damage throughout the State, it was determined that the damage that has currently been reviewed is not beyond the capabilities of the state and local governments. The results of the PDA are listed in Enclosure B. The State does reserve the right to apply for a Public Assistance declaration at a later date if more damages are discovered.

Rhode Island Natural Resources Conservation Service received approximately $2.4 million in ARRA funds to implement four Floodplain Easement projects, two of which will affect the historic flooding issues on the Pawtuxet River. These projects will restore the natural flood carrying capacities of the floodplain. These projects will also reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion. These projects will be fully completed by December 30, 2010; however this was not in time for the flooding that occurred from March 12, 2010 through March 18, 2010.

All of the towns and cities in State of Rhode Island participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). There are currently 15,091 NFIP policies covering both residential and commercial properties with coverage totaling $3,547,252,500. Some of these policies are held by properties that are not in a documented flood zone. However, of the 14,650 properties mapped in the flood zone, only 9,450 or 65% carry National Flood Insurance. The flooding affected properties both inside and outside of the documented floodplain, and most of homeowner's that were affected did not carry flood insurance.

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 governments and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Individual Assistance (including the Individuals and Households Program), Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling; and Small Businesses Administration Disaster loans. We request these programs for Kent, Newport, Providence, and Washington Counties. I am also requesting Hazard Mitigation statewide.

Preliminary estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are tabulated in Enclosures A and B. Estimated requirements for assistance from certain Federal agencies under other statutory authorities are tabulated in Enclosure C.

The following information is furnished on the nature and amount of State and local resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster:

- Upon activation of the State's Emergency Operation Plan, I instructed the Executive Director of Emergency Management to staff the State Emergency Operations Center as necessary on March 15th, 2010. The Executive Director activated Emergency Support Functions 1 (Transportation), 2 (Communications), 3 (Public Works & Engineering), 5 (Information and Planning), 6 (Mass Care), 7 (Resource Support), 8 (Health), 10 (Hazardous Materials), and 13 (Law Enforcement and Security) as necessary to respond to the event.

- The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) deployed a forward Incident Command Post in the affected community of West Warwick to further coordinate the response on-site due to reports that a high hazard dam was in imminent danger of failing. The State Office of Dam Safety of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) was deployed to the forward area along with requested engineers from the Army Corp of Engineers New England District.

- RIEMA supplied regional planning support to the communities of West Warwick, Cranston, and Coventry from March 15, 2010 through March 19, 2010 as requested to assist with initial damage assessments and other planning needs.

- The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) road crews assisted local jurisdictions with removing debris from the road system to allow vehicles access to the affected areas, emergency repairs to roads and bridges, and sandbagging to prevent further damages to infrastructure. RI DOT has been providing critical technical support to local authorities.

- Local jurisdictions public safety authorities throughout the state responded to numerous calls for pump outs of flooded homes and business, and performed and provided safety and security measures to affected areas.

- The American Red Cross (ARC) Rhode Island Chapter and other volunteer agencies were activated on Sunday March 14, 2010 to provide assistance and sheltering in West Warwick to families throughout the affected areas. Food was served and clean-up supplies were distributed by ARC volunteers. Although the numbers sheltered were low, most displaced individuals made arrangements to stay with family, friends, and hotels and the town of West Warwick and the ARC continue to monitor the situation for needs.

- The American Red Cross conducted preliminary damage assignments in the impacted communities. As a result of the damage assessment performed by the local chapter of the ARC, their National Headquarters has assigned a Disaster Relief Operations number, 294-10.RI 3/10 FLD, and will assist with supporting and staffing the operation.

- Rhode Island Community Food Bank provided food and personal items through their feeding American Network. The Tide Company, Loads of Hope program, made a donation of laundry detergent which is being distributed to the survivors.

- United Way 211 has to date received over 300 calls from effected homeowners and renters with a great majority of those calls asking for assistance to their flood and wind damaged homes.
- The Southern Baptists are mobilizing both debris removal teams and clean up teams.
- The Rhode Island National Guard prepared staged equipment in advance of possible deployment.

The fragile economic climate of the impacted communities and the State of Rhode Island requires significant assistance from the federal government to help return our citizens to their homes and to help businesses reopen for business. Our economic recovery will be severely hampered without the support and assistance from the federal government.

I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act. Total expenditures are expected to exceed $72,186, in accordance with the table in Enclosure D. The State has consistently experienced one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and is facing a $220 million dollar deficit this year, seriously compromising our ability to dedicate funds. We ask that the hardship be considered for a waiver of the non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act.

I have designated James David Smith, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

enclosures

ENCLOSURE A TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Requirements for Individual Assistance
Under the Stafford Act

County (List each requested county)	Assistance to Individuals and Households					Other Programs (Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Legal Services, and Crisis Counseling)
	Temporary Housing *(Indicate No.)*	Repairs	Replacement	Permanent Housing Construction	Other Needs Assistance	
KENT	$135,783	$1,108,464	0	0	$131,016	
NEWPORT	$34,272	$120,618	0	0	$33,072	
PROVIDENCE	$53,928	$257,064	0	0	$57,240	
WASHINGTON	$46,224	$268,182	0	0	$67,416	
Disaster Unemployment						$775,000
Legal Services						$5,000
Crisis Counseling						$6,950
TOTALS	$270,207	$1,754,328	0	0	$288,744	$786,950

ENCLOSURE B TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Requirements for Public Assistance
Stafford Act

CATEGORY

County	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
KENT	10,000	33,800	25,235			17,000		86,035
NEWPORT								0
PROVIDENCE	800	88,714	68,834				700	159,048
WASHINGTON	10,667	2,500	24,814					37,981
Totals:	21,467	125,014	118,883			17,000	700	283,064

Note: ***The State of Rhode Island is not requesting Public Assistance at this time.***

ENCLOSURE C TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

County	SBA Home Loans	SBA Business Loans
KENT	**$976,000.00**	**$1,192,000.00**
PROVIDENCE	**$914,000.00**	**$1,070,000.00**
WASHINGTON	**$187,000.00**	
NEWPORT	***No Data***	***No Data***
Totals	**$2,085,000.00**	**$2,262,000.00**

Note: *Due to counties being contiguous, the SBA ceased operations when their threshold was met.*

ENCLOSURE D TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Governor's Certification

I certify that for this current disaster, State and local government expenditures and obligations will include the non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act. As stated in my basic letter, and based on information available at this time, tabulation of these estimated expenditures and obligations are as follows:

Please note our request for a waiver as indicated in the basic letter.

CATEGORY OF ASSISTANCE	AMOUNT	
Individual Assistance:	STATE	LOCAL
"Other Assistance" under the Individuals and Households Program	$72,186	
Other (specify)		
Total:		
Grand Total:	$72,186	0