

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION  
MAJOR DISASTER**

**March 21, 2025**

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

Through:     Regional Administrator  
                 George A. Robinson  
                 FEMA Region 6  
                 800 North Loop 288  
                 Denton, TX 76209

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 request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Arkansas as a result of severe storms and tornadoes that began on March 14, 2025, and continued.

In response to this event, I took appropriate action under state law and directed the execution of the Arkansas Emergency Management Plan on March 14, 2025, and declared a State of Emergency on March 15, 2025. As a result of severe weather across the state, the State Emergency Operations Center was activated on March 15 and remained activated through 5:00 pm on March 16. The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management (ADEM) remained in close contact with emergency managers throughout the affected areas and coordinated with agencies and organizations, including the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Division, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), the Arkansas

Department of Human Services (ADHS), the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), the Arkansas National Guard (ARNG), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the National Weather Service (NWS), the American Red Cross of Arkansas, The Salvation Army, and the Arkansas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (ARVOAD). The State Emergency Operations Plan has been activated, resources from all state departments and agencies have been made available to meet this emergency, and these departments and agencies are hereby committed to the reasonable extent necessary to protect lives and to prevent, minimize, and repair injury and damage.

The sheer magnitude of this event created disastrous amounts of debris, extensive destruction to homes and businesses, and resulted in the death of three citizens, and caused injuries to countless others.

### **Weather Summary:**

A powerful storm system resulted in a multi-day outbreak of severe storms across Arkansas beginning Friday, March 14, and continuing through Saturday, March 15. A large-scale upper-level trough moved eastward from the Central Plains on March 14 and crossed the Lower Mississippi Valley on March 15. Increasingly favorable environmental conditions for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes spread across Arkansas ahead of the approaching upper-level trough, with a series of embedded disturbances in the main trough producing numerous reports of hazardous weather from March 14 to March 15.

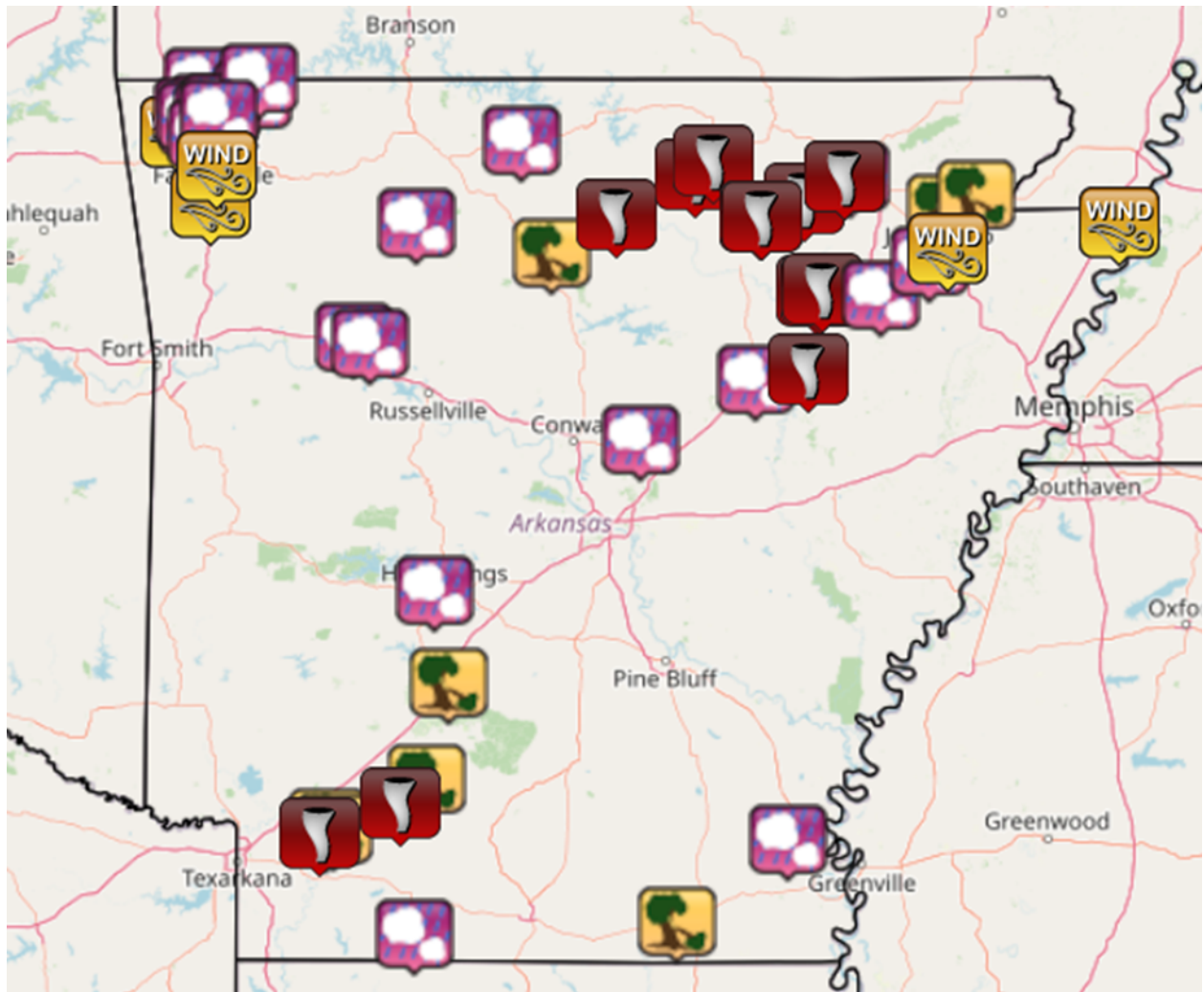
As of March 17, at least 3 fatalities and 32 injuries had been reported across Arkansas. Tornado surveys remain underway as of this writing, but for now, we can state:

- 10 of the tornadoes that have been confirmed were rated EF-2 or stronger.
- 6 tornadoes had paths of 18 miles or longer.
- 3 tornadoes tracked 32, 45, and 81 miles, respectively.
- The tornado which struck the towns of Cushman and Cave City is one of the longest tracks in state history with a path length of 81 miles and a total time on the ground of 1 hour and 35 minutes.
- This tornado outbreak is the second largest since the tornado outbreak on April 25, 2011, sitting behind the Memorial Day weekend outbreak of 2024.
- The number of EF-3+ tornadoes in this event is the highest since January 21, 1999.

Local National Weather Service offices received numerous reports of large hail (some as large as baseball-sized), damaging thunderstorm winds, and tornadoes. The upper-level trough shifted east during the day on March 15, ending the severe weather threat.

### **Storm Report Summary:**

*The map below contains all of the Local Storm Reports gathered by NWS Offices during this event.*



 Tornado 
  Wind Damage 
  Hail 
  Severe Thunderstorm Winds

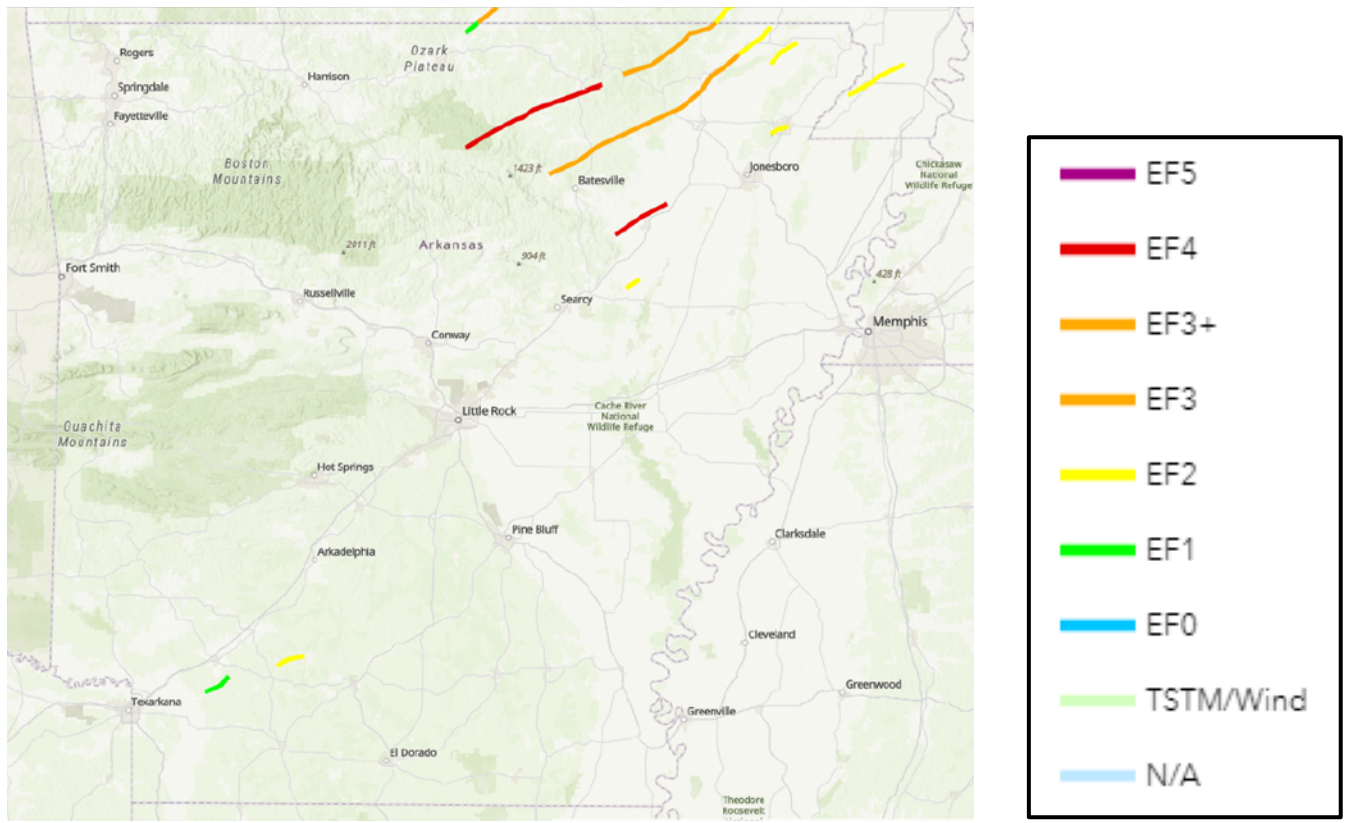
### Tornado Summary:

The table below includes any confirmed tornadoes by NWS Offices for this event.

County	Location	Start (CDT)	End (CDT)	EF Rating	Maximum Wind Speed (MPH)	Fatalities
Baxter	Gamaliel	8:34 PM	8:40 PM	EF-1	100	-
Stone/Sharp	Fifty-Six/ Ash Flat	9:16 PM	10:11 PM	EF-4	170	-
Hempstead	Patmos	10:09 PM	10:28 PM	EF-1	100	-
Independence/ Randolph	Cushman/ Reyno	10:16 PM	11:38 PM	EF-3	165	3
Sharp/Randolph	Williford/ Maynard	10:21 PM	10:56 PM	EF-3	155	-
Nevada	Cale/ Bluff City	10:55 PM	11:09 PM	EF-2	115	-

Independence/Jackson	Diaz	11:13 PM	11:36 PM	EF-4	190	-
Randolph/Clay	Corning	11:38 PM	11:51 PM	EF-2	120	-
Woodruff	Fitzhugh	11:50 PM	11:55 PM	EF-2	120	-
Clay	Walnut Grove	11:53 PM	12:02 AM	EF-2	135	-
Greene	Paragould	12:22 AM	12:34 AM	EF-2	125	-

### Map of tornado damage surveys completed by the NWS:



### Hail Reports:

Any known hail reports (greater than 1") that were sent to NWS Offices are listed below. Only 1 report of severe hail was received in Lawrence County. Other reports outside of Green, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Lawrence, Randolph, Sharp, and Stone counties received reports of hail greater than 1 inch.

Date	Time (CDT)	County	Location	Diameter (Inches)
3/14	5:31 PM	Benton	1 N Rogers	1.25
3/14	5:34 PM	Benton	2 E Cave Springs	1
3/14	5:35 PM	Benton	3 N Rogers	1
3/14	5:47 PM	Benton	Gateway	1

3/14	7:42 PM	Johnson	1 W Clarksville	1
3/14	7:52 PM	Marion	Summit	1
3/14	7:58 PM	Johnson	2 NW Lamar	1
3/14	8:05 PM	Newton	1 SW Gum Springs	1.75
3/14	10:52 PM	White	3 SW El Paso	1
3/14	11:17 PM	Lawrence	Black Rock	1.5
3/14	11:34 PM	White	1 NE Bald Knob	1.25
3/15	12:21 AM	Poinsett	4 WNW Weiner	1
3/15	12:34 AM	Craighead	4 SW Jonesboro	1
3/15	7:00 AM	Columbia	2 N Emerson	1.75

### **Damaging Wind Reports:**

Surface winds strengthened on March 14 ahead of thunderstorm activity, producing localized reports of non-thunderstorm wind damage. Both non-thunderstorm and thunderstorm wind reports are included in the table below. 2 reports of wind damage were received from Greene County on March 15.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time (CDT)</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Wind Gust (MPH)</b>	<b>Remark</b>
3/14	4:12 PM	Craighead	2 ENE Jonesboro	NON-TSTM WND GST	59	Jonesboro Airport ASOS gusted to 59 mph.
3/14	4:59 PM	Benton	Northwest Arkansas Region	TSTM WND GST	60	
3/14	5:18 PM	Benton	2 W Rogers	TSTM WND DMG		Thunderstorm wind gusts damaged tree limbs up to 2 inches in diameter.
3/14	6:05 PM	Washington	Shady Grove	NON-TSTM WND DMG		Report of a couple of power lines down. Some tin roof was also torn off. This damage was produced by non-thunderstorm winds estimated to be around 60 mph. Information was relayed by Broadcast Media.
3/14	6:23 PM	Washington	Drake Field	NON-TSTM WND GST	62	
3/14	8:56 PM	Searcy	2 SSE Leslie	TSTM WND DMG		Tree down on US 65.
3/14	10:12 PM	Hempstead	4 NW Patmos	TSTM WND DMG		***1 INJ*** Trailer house blown over south of Hope, AR. One person was taken to the hospital.
3/14	10:12 PM	Hempstead	3 WNW Patmos	TSTM WND DMG		Tree reported down on Hwy 29 south of Hope, AR.

3/14	10:20 PM	Clark	2 ENE Dexter B Florence	TSTM WND DMG		Trees down on AR Hwy 7 and Hwy 51.
3/14	10:25 PM	Hempstead	2 NNW Patmos	TSTM WND DMG		Damage to a roof and 4-wheelers, destroyed and flipped storage buildings, all near a home on Hempstead 57 Rd.
3/14	11:07 PM	Nevada	2 NNW Bluff City	TSTM WND DMG		Multiple trees down across roads, including Hwy 24 east of Prescott, AR.
3/15	12:21 AM	Greene	4 S Walcott	TSTM WND DMG		Several trees were uprooted or snapped near the Finch community at the intersection of County Road 737 and County Road 721. Possible tornado.
3/15	12:27 AM	Greene	1 SSW Paragould	TSTM WND DMG		Emergency management report of damage to homes in the Pruett Chapel area. Possible tornado.
3/15	1:09 AM	Mississippi	5 E Blytheville	NON- TSTM WND GST	58	
3/15	6:20 AM	Ashley	North Crossett	TSTM WND DMG		Report of multiple trees downed along HWY-52, HWY-133, and Camp Rd.

### **Uninsured Home and Personal Property Loss:**

Joint local, State, and FEMA Individual Assistance damage assessments began on March 17, 2025, and concluded on March 20, 2025. Damage assessments will continue to occur as residents return to their homes and assess the damage to their residences, and the locally owned businesses. After ground assessments, a review of geospatial data and open-source data, there have been 456 structures assessed with an average of 72.17% ownership and 66.77% insured:

- 156 categorized as destroyed
- 93 categorized as major
- 88 categorized as minor
- 119 categorized as affected

### **Casualties:**

This event resulted in the loss of three lives, all in Independence County. All three were lifelong residents and neighbors who ranged in age from 67-81 years old. Two of the victims, ages 67 and 70, were sisters who lived together. One of the sisters was pronounced deceased at the scene, while the other was transported to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased, as well, after a great deal of suffering. There have also been multiple injuries reported throughout the state. These injuries will eventually heal, but there will no doubt be the mental scars that will follow tens of thousands of Arkansans who have survived the damage while losing their entire life's belongings.

**State EOC Activation and Response:**

On March 15, 2025, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was activated to Level I at 0110 in response to the severe storms and tornadoes. Twenty-six personnel were assigned to the SEOC in response to the event over the two-day activation. The SEOC returned to Level III at 1700 on March 16, 2025.

During this event, ADEM coordinated with multiple state agencies, such as the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN), Arkansas Forestry Commission, Arkansas Department

During this event, ADEM coordinated with multiple state agencies, such as the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN), Arkansas Forestry Commission, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Public Service Commission, and the Arkansas National Guard. ARDOT assisted with debris removal and right-of-way clearance in the declared counties. AWIN deployed a Site on Wheels (SOW) & Cell on Wheels (COW), as well as twenty-two AWIN handheld radios to Cave City to assist in restoring communications for the residents and first responders. Arkansas Public Service Commission supplied the Cave City Water Treatment Plant in Sharp County with a 75-kilowatt 3-phase generator to avoid prolonged disruption to service for Cave City residents. The Arkansas Forestry Commission assisted the National Weather Service with an aerial drone flyover for the longest storm paths from Searcy County through Randolph County, Cleburne County to Clay County, White County to Craighead County, and White County to Poinsett County. ADEM deployed its Mobile Command Vehicle to Cave City on March 15 to assist with communication efforts and establish a temporary Command Center in the immediate response to the severe storms and tornadoes. The Mobile Command Vehicle was used from March 15 at 0940 to March 17 at 1730. The Arkansas Department of Corrections received a request through ADEM for an inmate crew to assist in debris removal in Jackson and Stone Counties, and over twenty personnel responded. The Arkansas Department of Health assisted displaced residents in Lawrence County finding solutions to obtaining prescription medications. Arkansas National Guard provided nine security force teams in Jackson and Sharp County, and a total of 90 National Guard troops were deployed to the affected communities.

**Volunteer Agencies:**

Due to the devastation in these affected counties, multiple volunteer agencies, under the guidance of ARVOAD, have set out to help survivors in these communities. Minuteman Disaster Response deployed a team to Cave City on March 17 and will remain on-site through March 22. Their team has experienced sawyers and a compact track loader with a grapple to assist with debris removal. The Food Bank of North Central Arkansas distributed over 110 pounds of food and water to disaster survivors. Crisis Clean Up and the Presbytery of Arkansas coordinated cleanup efforts in the affected communities. The American Red Cross provided food and shelter in Cave City. Operation BBQ Relief

provided over 500 meals to Cave City survivors. The American Red Cross is providing food, immediate needs, and has opened a temporary shelter in Cave City. First Baptist Church provided diesel fuel to those in need in Sharp County. Eight Days of Hope arrived in Cave City on March 20, providing services for cutting, removing tree debris, and placement of tarps. They will remain in the community until April 5. The East Side Baptist Church is serving as a disaster response team base for coordination and assessments. The Salvation Army is providing emergency services to survivors and first responders. U-Haul is providing Self-Storage Units in 10 locations across the affected areas for 30 days free of charge. Wal-Mart is coordinating with food banks to provide gift cards for survivors' immediate needs. Horseshoe Bend Chamber of Commerce is collecting immediately needed supplies and distributing them at food pantries and mobile units. Heart to Heart donated electrolyte drinks, hygiene kits, medicine, medical supplies, and PPE to non-profits and free clinics. American Logistics Aid Network is assisting non-profits with unmet logistical needs. Information Technology Disaster Resource Center is assisting with communication, phone services, computers, and logistical needs. Samaritans Purse is in the field doing damage assessments for debris removal, placement of tarps, cutting trees, and some repairs. ARVOAD is working with volunteer groups to establish Multi Agency Resource Centers in three of the most impacted counties to provide a one-stop-shop for survivors to receive resources to aid in recovery.

#### **Disaster Impacted Population Profile:**

These counties are in dire need of assistance to help individuals regain suitable living conditions that cannot be obtained at their current financial status. The average unemployment rate for the nine counties under Individual Assistance is 3.95%. Because several of the hardest-hit areas also experienced major damage to infrastructure, industry, trade, local businesses, and agricultural enterprises, applications for disaster-related unemployment are expected to be high.

<i>Percentage of the population:</i>	<i>for whom poverty status is determined</i>	<i>Already receiving governmental assistance</i>	<i>Pre-disaster unemployment rate</i>	<i>65 years and older</i>	<i>18 years and younger</i>	<i>with a disability</i>	<i>who speak a language other than English</i>
Data Source*	US Census Bureau	Arkansas DHS	US Census Bureau	US Census Bureau	US Census Bureau	US Census Bureau	US Census Bureau
National Average	11.1%	6.62%	3.8%	17.5%	21.7%	22.7%	22%
State Average	15.7%	8.76%	3.3%	18.0%	23%	13.1%	8.09%
Requested Jurisdictions							
Greene	16.2%	0.23%	3.7%	16.7%	23.7%	15.8%	2.2%
Hot Spring	16.9%	0.14%	3.7%	19.7%	19.0%	20.6%	3.1%
Independence	13.5%	0.15%	3.1%	18.6%	24.2%	15.1%	6.0%
Izard	20.3%	0.06%	5.4%	25.3%	17.9%	18.9%	3.2%
Jackson	24.6%	0.10%	4.5%	18.3%	19.8%	18.6%	1.3%



Lawrence	18.3%	0.09%	3.5%	19.5%	22.2%	16.1%	1.7%
Randolph	18.5%	0.08%	3.5%	19.4%	24.6%	16.1%	4.5%
Sharp	19.7%	0.10%	3.9%	25.9%	20.2%	16.2%	1.5%
Stone	17.7%	0.06%	4.3%	28.7%	19.7%	17.5%	2.3%

While infrastructure is crucial to economic growth, citizens also play a vital role in the need for recovery efforts. According to the United States Census Bureau, Arkansas currently has 16.8% of individuals below the poverty level, making the state the fifth in the nation among impoverished states. While this may not appear to be a large number, the average number of individuals living below the poverty level within the counties affected is 18.41%, with Jackson County representing the most significant number of residents below the poverty level at 24.6% and Sharp County at 19.7% that was one of the hardest hit areas. However, each affected county struggles with poverty. Severe poverty is a significant component of economic depression, leading to the need for assistance. The median income for Arkansans is \$58,700; however, a large percentage of homes affected represent individuals below the poverty level, which creates a hardship for individuals needing to repair or replace their property.

The individuals residing in the nine counties seek to remain in their communities but ask for assistance to repair their property. Based on preliminary damage assessments conducted by FEMA, housing assistance is needed for an estimated 249 households. Temporary housing provided by FEMA would help individual and community recovery by keeping citizens close to their homes and allowing the tax base to remain in place.

### **Housing Stock:**

There is a significant deficit in available and affordable housing in the rural affected areas, which could lead to a future housing mission. Three of the hardest hit communities, the cities of Cave City, Diaz, and Fifty-Six, are all an hour to two hours away from Jonesboro, the nearest city with the hotel and rental stock that can accommodate the survivors. A temporary housing mission would help keep citizens in their communities and allow the tax base to stay in place.

### **Sheltering:**

With close to 500 homes impacted, many families struggle to find temporary shelter and permanent home solutions. The American Red Cross opened a temporary shelter for displaced survivors in Cave City, one of the most impacted areas of the state. While most of the survivors of this disaster are fortunate enough to be able to temporarily shelter with family members in their current communities, long-term sheltering and housing options for the 250 households who had major damage or completely lost their homes are uncertain. Sheltering solutions close to schools and places of employment will be a main priority for local and state officials.

### **Power Outages:**

At the peak of the event, an estimated 30,941 households were without power, and as of

writing this letter there are currently 3,600 households still without power. The power companies are working to restore lines and power to the community where it is safe to do so. Even as the damage assessment teams continue to survey the damage, downed power lines are throughout the affected area.

#### **Disaster Related Unemployment and Other Community Impacts:**

In Clay County, a farm consisting of approximately 8,000 acres was impacted along State Highway 135 in Knobel. Damage was incurred to portable grain elevators, power units, semi-trucks and trailers, grain carts, and two equipment sheds, with an estimated \$3,000,000 in damages.

In Randolph County, the largest employer in the county, PECO Foods, sustained structural damage near Pocahton and lost its cooling system, which was an anhydrous ammonia cooling system. As of March 19, it was still not in operation, resulting in employees being unable to work. Randolph County had a pre-disaster unemployment rate of 3.5% and, if PECO Foods remains non-operational for an extended period of time, approximately 2,000 employees would be unemployed, causing the unemployment rate to rise in Randolph County. Biggers-Reyno Volunteer Fire Department sustained damage to their firehouse and will result in a delayed response to the two communities of Biggers and Reyno.

The only grocery store in Cave City, Hometown Market, sustained heavy damage and will likely be closed for at least three months to recover. This will greatly impact the community, as residents will now need to travel 30 miles round-trip to Batesville to procure food. Also, in Cave City, the town's only funeral home, health clinic, pharmacy, and auto parts store were badly damaged or completely destroyed. A multi-unit storage facility was also completely leveled, leaving many residents to comb through the rubble to try and reclaim the remnants of their lives. The loss of these critical businesses was a devastating blow to this community and will be felt for years to come. Additionally, the cellular tower in Cave City, located in the city's center, was completely destroyed, leaving thousands unable to communicate within city limits. This will profoundly affect everything from emergency services to everyday communication between loved ones and friends for weeks to come.

The Campbell Station Volunteer Fire Department in Jackson County was completely destroyed during the storms. Because of this, firefighters will now have to be deployed from the town of Tuckerman, which will delay responses by at least 8 miles. This will cost critical time and potential loss of life that could have been saved during any emergency response situation. Jacksonport Volunteer Fire Department also sustained damage to their firehouse and a few of their fire apparatuses, which will cause delayed response times to the Jacksonport community.

In Stone County, Fifty-Six, a popular tourist destination due to its proximity to Blanchard Springs Caverns, suffered heavy damage to numerous small businesses, which provided

much-needed employment and resources to the community. In addition, one of the only churches in the area, Fifty-Six Missionary Baptist Church, suffered heavy structural damage and will adversely affect Fifty-Six as this is a key meeting area for the community and a place of gathering and worship for many who are now suffering and in need of the support that they have come to rely upon from their fellow church-goers. The Fifty-Six City Hall also sustained heavy damage; a pivotal meeting area for the community that is now unavailable. The Fifty-Six community park is now rendered unusable due to the damage it incurred. This will negatively impact small communities such as Fifty-Six since it, as well as all of Arkansas, is known for its accessibility to the beauty of nature and its expansive outdoor spaces.

On March 16, the NWS reported that much drier air moved into the state in the wake of the strong storm system that brought all of the severe weather with it. Humidity dropped below 20% in many areas with winds between 20-25 mph. This drier air continued through March 20 and resulted in over 100 wildfires breaking out across the state in one day. On March 19, wind gusts neared 60 mph in Central Arkansas, which made containing the fires extremely difficult. At one point, power outages exceeded 28,000 across the state from the wind gusts. Because of these fires, the Arkansas Forestry Commission needed to focus its limited resources on these fires and was restricted in what resources they could provide for the recovery efforts from the severe storms and tornadoes.

Many of these communities are still recovering from state-declared disasters from 2024. On January 22, 2024, severe storms and flooding struck Arkansas and continued impacting Clark, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Nevada, and Sharp Counties, and in several others. The storms resulted in extensive debris and road damage within the affected counties. On October 11, 2024, a state of emergency was declared for Nevada County due to severe storms and flooding that had impacted the county.

Since 2023, Arkansas has managed four federally declared disasters and ten state-declared disasters. Many of the affected communities were in one way or another impacted by one or more of these disasters, which in turn has made recovery efforts difficult and long-term for many.

#### **Public Assistance Impact on Community Infrastructure:**

The State's current Public Assistance Categories A-G estimate exceeds \$11.6 million, with debris totals estimated at \$3,706,494.89.

Electric Cooperatives throughout the affected area estimate more than \$8.6 million in damages. These cooperatives provide low-cost, reliable electric energy and related services such as the internet, which improves the quality of life for tens of thousands of members throughout the affected areas. They keep the lights on across Arkansas, primarily low-income residential and sparsely populated areas. Without these services, these communities, from small business owners to private citizens, will suffer

daily. Restoring these cooperatives to full power will be a crucial first step for these communities attempting to rebuild their lives post-disaster.

Joint Public Assistance preliminary damage assessments have been requested to begin March 24, 2025. Those assessments will help validate the current estimates and provide additional estimates for categories A-G.

In conclusion, without the assistance of a Major Disaster Declaration, it will be difficult for Arkansas to bear all of the responsibility and properly recover from this event. I have determined that these storms are of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am requesting Individual Assistance and U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loans for Greene, Hot Spring, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Lawrence, Randolph, Sharp, and Stone counties. Your favorable consideration for this declaration is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sarah Sanders", written in a cursive style.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders

Enclosures:

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

Enclosure A: Individual Assistance

NWS Data

Executive Order