

Snyder asks for presidential disaster declaration

Kathleen Gray, Detroit Free Press Lansing Bureau 11:14 p.m. EDT September 17, 2014

After a two-week damage assessment caused by a historic rainfall and flooding in Detroit on Aug. 11, Gov. Rick Snyder has asked for a presidential declaration of disaster in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb.



(Photo: Jessica J. Trevino Detroit Free Press)

The devastating flood in metro Detroit on Aug. 11 caused \$1.1 billion in damages and significantly flooded 118,000 homes and businesses in the region, according to a letter sent by Gov. Rick Snyder in asking President Barack Obama to give the region a presidential declaration of disaster.

The 10-page letter, which the Free Press obtained Wednesday night, detailed the destruction from the flood, including

- \$1.1 billion in damages, including \$16.7 million in damages to public buildings, roads, bridges and the cost of debris removal.
- Different communities were particularly hard hit: 23,000 homes in Warren, 7,600 in Dearborn, and 7% of the housing stock in Detroit.
- Of the homes flooded, 243 were verified as destroyed.
- 80% of the homes that were damaged in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties had owners with no insurance to pay for the costs, and many live near or below the poverty level.

"Without significant assistance from the federal government, these and other households like them will experience severe financial hardship for years as they attempt to recover from this flood disaster," Snyder said.

The state is unable to help pay for the losses, Snyder said, especially since it had to deal with two other natural disasters in the previous year – severe flooding in and around Grand Rapids last year and a deep freeze in northern Michigan this past winter.

"I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective recovery is beyond the capabilities of the state of Michigan and the affected local governments," Snyder wrote in his letter. "Federal relief assistance is definitely needed to address the unmet needs of those most severely affected by the flooding."

The request came after a two-week assessment of damage caused by a historic rainfall and flooding in Detroit on Aug. 11.



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Snyder requested federal aid in the form of Individual Assistance and Public Assistance to help eligible residents and state and local governments because of the severity and magnitude of the flooding, which shut down freeways and flooded countless basements across the region.

"So many communities were devastated by the historic flood, and we're looking for every available resource to help them recover," Snyder said in a statement Wednesday. "I was proud of the way Michiganders pulled together to help neighbors and family members. The state was able to provide assistance, and I'm asking the federal government for additional resources as the recovery efforts continue."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will evaluate the request and make a recommendation, a process that should happen quickly, said Sandy Jesmund, of FEMA's Chicago office.



Randy Quick of Center Line empties water from a heater while helping his parents carry items to the trash from their house on McKinley that were in a flood on Tuesday, Aug. 12, 2014, after heavy rains flooded many areas in metro Detroit. (Photo: Ryan Garza/Detroit Free Press)

If the disaster is declared, FEMA will come to the state and set up a field office to help flood-ravaged businesses, residents and communities.

Snyder declared a state of disaster on Aug. 13 for Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties. If federal aid is granted, assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help people and businesses recover from the effects of the flooding.

Public assistance helps cover some of the costs incurred by state and local governments due to damage to public facilities and infrastructures, such as schools and roads.



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