



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 13, 2022

Governor requests greater federal assistance for New Mexicans, asks federal government to cover 100% of disaster costs

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday sent a letter to President Joe Biden requesting additional federal assistance under the disaster declaration signed by the president earlier this month in response to widespread wildfire activity across the state.

“New Mexico is utilizing every available asset to combat the advancing fires,” the governor’s letter to the President reads. “However, the ever-increasing costs to save lives and protect New Mexicans’ homes, property, and heritage as these fires continue exceeds the capability of the state. New Mexico’s response to these devastating fires warrants the full resources and support of the federal government.”

Gov. Lujan Grisham requested that the President, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), immediately authorize federal funding for additional eligible types of federal support, including the full range of emergency assistance under Category B of Public Assistance, as well as Category A, debris removal. The governor previously requested these services be made available to New Mexico in her initial request for a disaster declaration, however only partial approval of Category B was granted (mass care sheltering and direct federal assistance), while Category A was not granted at all.

Gov. Lujan Grisham also requested today that the federal government assume responsibility for 100% of the costs associated with the response and recovery for the wildfires under the declared disaster. While federal disaster declarations typically employ a 75%/25% respective cost share between the federal government and the state, the governor emphasized that both the severity of the ongoing wildfires and the U.S. Forest Service’s culpability for the prescribed burn that resulted in the Hermits Peak Fire underscore the need for the federal government to cover 100% of the total eligible costs.

The full letter can be found attached to this press release.

The state reminds affected New Mexicans that residents and business owners impacted by the ongoing wildfires should apply for assistance by registering with FEMA at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA(3362). If you have already registered for assistance with FEMA, you will not need to reapply to receive these benefits.

To date, FEMA reports that more than 260 households in New Mexico have already been approved for federal relief.

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are on the ground supporting affected New Mexicans and assisting them in applying for federal relief at the official evacuation shelters in Las Vegas, Glorieta, Taos, Peñasco, and Raton, as well as at the Ruidoso Community Center.

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State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

May 13, 2022

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

Through: Tony Robinson
Regional Administrator FEMA Region VI
Federal Regional Center
800 N. Loop 288
Denton, TX 76209-3606

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for issuing a Major Disaster Declaration for the New Mexico Wildfires and Straight-line Winds Event. The federal resources that have flowed into New Mexico following your Declaration have been incredibly helpful. Unfortunately, however, our state is in need of greater assistance.

Over the last two decades, more than 5 million acres of land were burned by wildfires in and around New Mexico. According to the National Integrated Drought Information System, nearly 80% of the State is now in “extreme” drought, with nearly 25% of the state in “exceptional” drought. These conditions, compounded by ongoing extreme winds, present a destructive and unprecedented challenge for the state of New Mexico.

Wildfires captured under DR-4652-NM have already eclipsed the 2012 Whitewater-Baldy Fire Complex—which burned over 290,000 acres—as the largest burn in New Mexico’s history. Thousands of New Mexicans have been forced to evacuate their homes; many may not have homes when they return. At least two New Mexicans have perished, and the fires have destroyed hundreds of structures. As this devastation continues, the need for federal resources to respond to and recover from these fires intensifies.

New Mexico is utilizing every available asset to combat the advancing fires. However, the ever-increasing costs to save lives and protect New Mexicans’ homes, property, and heritage as these

fires continue exceeds the capability of the state. New Mexico's response to these devastating fires warrants the full resources and support of the federal government. Therefore, I formally request that FEMA immediately authorize federal funding for debris removal (Category A) and the full range of emergency protective measures (Category B). Given that the wildfires are ongoing, this disaster will require prolonged response efforts. Additionally, complex debris removal operation will take a significant amount of time to complete once the wildfires are contained.

Further, I request that the federal government cover 100 percent of the total eligible costs under DR-4652-NM pursuant to 44 C.F.R. § 206.47(d). While many of the necessary damage assessments have not yet been completed due to ongoing danger in the affected areas, it is clear that the damage done by these fires is already significant. It is also worth noting that one of the most catastrophic wildfires captured under DR-4652-NM—the Hermits Peak Fire—started as a result of an April 6 U.S. Forest Service prescribed burn that unfortunately lost containment during a high wind event. Given this and the severity of the ongoing wildfires, I respectfully request a full waiver of New Mexico's cost-share for the entire disaster period.

If you require additional information related to this correspondence, please contact do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico