

Gov. Evers: Requests Federal Damage Assessments for storm damage

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers has requested the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to conduct a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) later this month for 19 Wisconsin counties and tribes hit hard by severe storms, flooding, straight line winds and tornadoes. This is the first step in potentially requesting federal disaster aid for local governments as they recover from the storms.

“Since the storms hit two weeks ago, I have traveled the state, meeting with disaster victims and local officials, and viewing damage,” said Gov. Evers. “Our first responders, emergency managers, utility workers, the Wisconsin National Guard, volunteers, and local, tribal and state officials have been working tirelessly to help those affected by the storms. I look forward to having FEMA in our state to work with Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) officials to validate the severe damage we have seen and possibly seek federal assistance.”

Teams comprised of officials with FEMA and WEM will work with local, tribal and state officials in viewing public infrastructure damage in Barron, Clark, Forest, La Crosse, Langlade, Marinette, Menominee, Monroe, Oconto, Oneida, Outagamie, Polk, Portage, Rusk, Vernon, Waupaca, and Wood counties. In addition, FEMA will assess damage on tribal lands of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin.

“The storms caused major damage across the northern half of Wisconsin,” said Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin’s adjutant general. “The Wisconsin National Guard continues to support local governments as they work hard to remove debris left from the storms.”

A series of severe storms moved across parts of western and northern Wisconsin beginning

late on July 18 and continuing through July 20. The first round brought over 5" of rain causing flash flooding in the Vernon and La Crosse county area. Storms Friday and Saturday resulted in strong winds with speeds up to 100 mph in portions of northern Wisconsin, downing hundreds of thousands of trees and numerous power lines. In addition, the storms spun up 17 tornadoes. Another line of storms moved through central Wisconsin on Saturday causing significant damage to the Fox Cities area.

Current local damage assessments show more than \$14 million in damage to public infrastructure. Most of the costs are for emergency protective measures, debris removal and damage to electrical equipment owned by municipal and rural electric cooperatives.

"We value our relationship with FEMA and look forward to working with them through this process as we provide support to those impacted and still recovering from the storms," said Dr. Darrell Williams, WEM Administrator.

FEMA will not be assessing damage to individual homes, cabins or businesses. Much of the reported damage by individuals is either covered by insurance or would not qualify for federal disaster assistance such as downed trees on private property.

Gov. Evers continues to be updated about the cleanup and recovery efforts. The information gathered in the PDA will be provided to the governor to determine if the state would qualify for a federal disaster declaration for public assistance for local governments.