

Beacon Falls, Litchfield, New Haven, Infrastructure, News, Public Safety

Biden Approves Emergency Declaration After Connecticut Flooding

— Juliann Ventura, 8.21.2024



WASHINGTON, D.C. — In response to **severe flooding** on Sunday that resulted in at least two deaths and destroyed roads and bridges in southwestern Connecticut, President Joe Biden **approved** the state's emergency declaration that Gov. Ned Lamont **requested** Monday, opening the door to federal relief during the recovery process.

In a **letter** written to Biden on Tuesday, Lamont described some of what southwestern Connecticut endured: 16 inches of rain in as little as six to eight hours that caused multiple life safety issues in Litchfield County and more than 100 evacuations due to rising water levels, flooding and landslides.

“Landslides have occurred in numerous locations, including in the City of Danbury, which severed a gas main forcing 10 units of a condominium project to be evacuated. Another senior housing apartment complex was severely flooded and compromised, requiring 40 to 50 people being evacuated and requiring housing,” Lamont wrote.

Lamont added that in some areas, the rainfall was significant enough to qualify as a 1,000-year flood, meaning that a flood of that magnitude had a 0.1% chance of happening.

Roads and bridges were also reported damaged in Fairfield and New Haven Counties, and the Metro North Train Line to New York City was shut down.

Lamont’s **request** specifically called for 100% reimbursement for direct federal assistance – goods and services provided to an area that is unable to perform emergency work – and emergency protective measures for the counties of Litchfield, New Haven and Fairfield. Lamont **asked** for help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with repairing infrastructure, the Environmental Protection Agency to evaluate environmental waterway damages from things like oil or propane tanks and the Federal Highway Administration to help with damaged roads.

Biden’s approval allows the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate relief efforts. It also specifies that for the emergency protective measures in the counties of Litchfield, New Haven and Fairfield, federal funding will cover 75% of the costs related to direct assistance.

Emergency declarations like the one Lamont called for allow communities to get assistance faster through governmental programs like the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is not a replacement for insurance but can jumpstart the recovery process by providing basic needs like essential home repairs.

Connecticut's federal delegation backed Lamont's request in a **letter** to President Joe Biden on Tuesday.

"While the state of Connecticut and affected municipalities conducted emergency responses and initial recovery efforts, federal support is absolutely critical to full recovery," the delegation wrote. "We therefore urge you to swiftly declare a state of emergency for the state of Connecticut, as requested on August 20, 2024, by Governor Lamont, to enable vital supplementary federal assistance."

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, who visited Seymour on Monday, **said** at a press conference that "the devastation there is heartbreaking and gut churning, not just to the physical infrastructure – road, bridges and the cost to the municipality – but also to the small businesses who have suffered damage they cannot recover (from)."

"Who would have thought that the Little River would turn into a gushing torrent of destruction," Blumenthal added on Monday, prior to Lamont formally requesting federal assistance.

Sen. Chris Murphy, who is in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention this week, mentioned the flooding in an **interview** on CNN on Tuesday. He said that he'd "been on the phone all day with municipal leaders. We've already lost lives."

Even prior to Lamont's request, Murphy said that he suspected that the area would need federal assistance and indicated that he would be ready. "Hopefully we'll get this under control by the end of the day and we're going to be ready to deliver federal aid if there's the need, which, unfortunately, I think there will be," he said.

Lamont said in a statement on Sunday that the state's search and rescue teams had helped at least 100 people. As of Wednesday evening, there are a dozen **road closures**.

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