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Gov. Gregoire Requests Federal Disaster Declaration for Wind Storm Damage

OLYMPIA - Governor Chris Gregoire today asked President Bush for federal disaster aid for December wind storm damages to public facilities in 19 Washington counties. The request covers Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Grant, Grays Harbor, Island, King, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston and Wahkiakum counties

“Washington sustained severe damage from these wind storms, especially to our utilities, and we need federal assistance to fully repair all of these facilities,” said Governor Gregoire. “I urge President Bush to act quickly on this request so that we can start work to return life to normal in Washington.”

The December 14 – 15 winds were the strongest in Washington since the major disaster declared for the 1993 inauguration day wind storm, and blew down thousands of trees, knocking out power to nearly 1.5 million customers across the state. The strong winds damaged major transmission lines, power poles and other power utility infrastructure. There were four fatalities as a direct result of the storm. Ten fatalities from carbon monoxide poisoning are linked indirectly to the storm.

The request is based on a damage survey conducted in early January by teams of local, state and federal officials. Survey teams found an estimated \$47 million in eligible damages to public facilities in the 19 counties. To be considered for a federal disaster declaration, there needed to be at least \$7.5 million in estimated public facility damage.

Types of public facility damage and costs that may be eligible for aid include debris removal, emergency protective measures and damages to non-federal road systems and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and equipment, public utilities, parks and recreational facilities.

Governor Gregoire in December ordered the Military Department to conduct a thorough review of wind storm response activities and make recommendations on how to improve these processes.

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