



# COUNTY OF VENTURA

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January 9, 2024

Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Subject: Recommendation of Supervisor Lopez and Supervisor LaVere to Support a 5-signature Letter Advocating for Disaster Relief for Impacted Communities in the Cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Ventura, Due to Recent Unprecedented Weather Events**

### **Recommendation:**

That our Board of Supervisors collectively sign and send a Letter to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CAL OES) Advocating for Disaster Relief for Impacted Communities in the Cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Ventura, Due to Recent Unprecedented Weather Events.

### **2024-2027 Strategic Plan:**

- Strategic Priority - Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities
  - Goal 3: Promote community resilience and strengthen our ability to withstand and recover from disaster or adversity.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

None.

### **Background:**

During the week of December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the County of Ventura, specifically the Cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Ventura, experienced a severe rainstorm producing an unprecedented amount of rainfall. The majority of rainfall occurred on or about the early morning hours of December 21, 2023 with what the Los Angeles Times described as a "once-in-a-millennium rainfall". The Cities of Port Hueneme and Oxnard were the most impacted with rainfall rates exceeding 3 inches in one hour, which according to the National Weather Service is the highest rate recorded for the area in at least 100 years.

The torrential downpour caused extensive street flooding and flood damage to at least 422 residential structures; the majority of which are in Oxnard and Port Hueneme. The City of Ventura also suffered major damage to residential structures and vehicles located in the Eastside of the City. Over 600 vehicles parked on City streets were destroyed/damaged by the flooding. Municipal facilities and other commercial structures were also damaged.

The impacts from the storm and flooding resulted in multiple evacuations, coordinated road closures/detours, activation of an Emergency Operations Center, and the provision of additional emergency response units and specialty-trained swift water rescue teams. The Ventura County Fire Department alone had over 110 additional personnel to assist during this weather event.

The Cities of Port Hueneme and Oxnard declared a “Local State of Emergency” via Resolution on December 27, 2023, and January 2, 2024, respectively, primarily to signal to state and federal officials the need for disaster assistance. Both cities submitted letters to Cal OES requesting a variety of support programs for assistance. Of these support programs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Assistance Program and the Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Loan Program are the only two that can assist residents.

**Discussion:**

On January 4, 2024, the County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services hosted a Storm Briefing with local, state, and federal elected officials having purview over the impacted areas. The goal of the briefing was to share information on the severity of damage, the outstanding needs of the community, and to garner support from our state and federal elected officials who are key influencers when it comes to disaster funding.

The storm and flood impacts to the Cities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme affected the cities' most vulnerable populations, specifically seniors, low-income families, and undocumented individuals, most of whom are farmworkers. In addition to flooded homes, those who lost their vehicles to flooding are unable to go to medical appointments, school, and work, creating additional stress and financial strain in communities within the high poverty percentile according to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

Despite the severity of the damage to residential structures, it is unlikely that the FEMA Individual Assistance Program would apply due to the program's threshold requiring damage to 1,200 homes. As a result, CAL OES has decided not to provide a “Director's Concurrence” of the local state of emergencies. This prevents the County and respective Cities from being able to have any discussions with FEMA about the severity of the December 21<sup>st</sup> rainfall event, the financial status of those most affected, and the critical need for individual funding assistance from FEMA.

Supervisor LaVere and I strongly believe that a numerical threshold (i.e. 1,200 homes) should not be the only determinant in the potential provision of individual emergency funding assistance to those who suffered major damage from this unprecedented event. We ask that our fellow Supervisors agree to signing the attached letter to Cal OES Director, Nancy Ward, insisting on the provision of a “Director's Concurrence” and the advancement of the request for FEMA

Individual Assistance to Region 9. Without this concurrence, there are no government-funded disaster grant programs available to residents.

Many of the individuals impacted by this event are not U.S. Citizens therefore are not eligible for FEMA funding. Because of this gap, we are also requesting that the Governor explore options for a one-time funding with the intent to establish a local assistance grant program. This critical funding would be methodically distributed to those vulnerable members of our community, most severely impacted by this disaster.

Supervisor LaVere and I encourage our entire Board of Supervisors to stand together in seeking assistance for all residents throughout the County of Ventura and support this request for Disaster Relief Funding to Cal OES.

This letter and draft letter to Cal OES have been reviewed by the CEO, County Counsel, and Ventura County Office of Emergency Services.

Sincerely,



Vianey Lopez  
Supervisor, Fifth District



Matt LaVere  
Supervisor, First District

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – DRAFT Letter to CAL OES Director, Nancy Ward
- Exhibit 2 – City of Port Hueneme Local State of Emergency Proclamation
- Exhibit 3 – City of Oxnard Local State of Emergency Proclamation