



HENRY DARGAN McMASTER  
GOVERNOR

December 13, 2024

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

Through: Regional Administrator Robert Samaan (Region IV)  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
3005 Chamblee Tucker Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

Dear Mr. President:

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121–5207 (“Stafford Act”), and implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I respectfully request that you declare a major disaster for the State of South Carolina as a result of severe storms and heavy rainfall, which caused significant flooding that impacted portions of the State from November 6 through November 14, 2024. To illustrate the magnitude of this hazardous weather event and the scope of the unanticipated impacts, Calhoun County received more than 14 inches of rain in a 24-hour period, and Orangeburg County similarly recorded more than 12.4 inches during that same period. Consequently, the Edisto River crested at record heights in several locations. The storm and resulting flooding tragically caused two deaths, as well as significant damage in at least three counties. The three counties most significantly impacted by the heavy rainfall and riverine flooding also experienced damage in connection with Tropical Storm Debby in August and Hurricane Helene in September.

Based on damage assessments validated in Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (“JPDA’s”) conducted by FEMA, state, and county teams, I am requesting all categories of Public Assistance (“PA”) for three counties and Individual Assistance (“IA”) for two counties, as detailed below:

For IA: Bamberg and Orangeburg Counties  
For all categories of PA: Bamberg, Calhoun, and Orangeburg Counties

In addition to the foregoing, I am also seeking Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (“HMGP”) assistance statewide. I am requesting that you designate an incident period of November 6, 2024, through November 14, 2024.

In anticipation of and in response to this situation, I consulted with officials in the impacted counties and took appropriate action under state law. On November 7, 2024, I issued Executive Order No. 2024-33, which declared a State of Emergency for the State of South Carolina and directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan in accordance with Section 401(a) of the Stafford Act. The State Emergency Operations Center activated, and state and local government agencies acted quickly to respond to the no-notice flash and riverine flooding caused by the extreme rainfall event.

### **I. Overview of Impacts and Costs**

Three counties reported experiencing damage or incurring corresponding costs, and residents reported some degree of damage to more than 100 homes. Public agency costs and expenses related to infrastructure damage are projected to exceed \$11 million. Two of the counties, Bamberg and Orangeburg, already suffered significant damage from other events this year. Bamberg County was impacted by a tornado in January and both counties witnessed heavy rainfall and flooding from Tropical Storm Debby and high winds and heavy rain from Hurricane Helene. Based on the JPDAs, three counties have met their respective county thresholds for PA program eligibility. The State’s validated PA-eligible costs of \$11,563,613 to date exceed the FFY2025 South Carolina state threshold for PA of \$9,673,823.25.

Quick-onset flash flooding took residents as well as infrastructure operators by surprise. Weather forecasts the evening of November 6 called for moderately heavy rainfall amounts of two to four inches, with the potential for localized rainfall of up to six inches. Local emergency managers and responders were monitoring weather forecasts and conditions but did not identify or anticipate a major threat. As heavy rainfall continued overnight, river-crest projections began to rise, and reports of rising waters started, as did the need for evacuations and water rescues. Local officials halted school-bus operations early in the morning of November 7 because some areas were impassable.

**24-hour rainfall amounts, November 6–7, 2024**

<b>County</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Rainfall Total (in)</b>
Calhoun	7 W Saint Matthews	14.62
Orangeburg	North 5.2 E	12.45
Barnwell	Blackville	12.09
Calhoun	North 8.6 ENE	11.00
Orangeburg	Orangeburg 3.2 NW	10.95
Orangeburg	Orangeburg 7.6 N	10.87
Bamberg	Denmark 4.7 NNE	10.40
Orangeburg	Neeses	10.00

As a result of the storm's heavy rainfall, more than 200 roads in Orangeburg County were closed by floodwaters, and six dams breached. A local water system in Orangeburg County was damaged, and supplies were interrupted for several days until repairs could be made. Orangeburg County opened a shelter and a point of distribution for water. Damage was reported to 27 businesses and more than 65 residences in two counties. Calhoun County also reported damage to county and state roads. Several counties reported riverine flooding along portions of the Edisto River, with levels exceeding those associated with other recent and historic flood events, including Hurricane Helene and the historic 2015 flood.

## II. Response

Local and county responders and mutual aid resources engaged promptly to evacuate and rescue residents and restrict access to flooded and damaged roadways. Emergency management and response organizations from other counties quickly assisted by providing water rescue equipment and teams and emergency operations center support. State agencies, including the S.C. Department of Transportation, S.C. Department of Public Safety, and the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation responded to control traffic, support rescues, assess dams and bridges, repair critical infrastructure, and restore essential services. The State Emergency Operations Center activated at OPCON 2. Downstream counties along the Edisto River prepared for high river crests as the floodwaters moved through the system. Fortunately, however, because of the previous month's reduced rainfall, the river system and adjacent wetlands were able to absorb some of the extreme flow as the floodwaters moved into Colleton and Dorchester Counties.

The following additional information is provided to illustrate the nature and extent of the impacts associated with this disaster:

**Orangeburg County** received 12.45 inches of rain in less than 24 hours, which resulted in flooded neighborhoods and two fatalities. Other impacts of the flood included damage to residences, public roads and bridges, and water infrastructure. Flooded or washed-out roads bifurcated the county, which isolated approximately 25,000 people and added an hour-and-a-half drive time for emergency transportation to a hospital in another county. The county estimates that residential and commercial damage costs of more than \$8.5 million and more than \$10 million in public infrastructure damage and emergency response costs. The North Fork of the Edisto River crested at 15.6 feet in Orangeburg, which was higher than the previous record of 14 feet in 2015. The river rose 11.6 feet in 24 hours.

Walmart, which is the primary grocery and pharmacy retailer for the Town of North, South Carolina, was closed for 15 days. The only grocery and pharmacy in the western part of the county was closed for two days due to water-system damage. A local CVS pharmacy will be closed until April 2025 because of damage. As of early December, approximately 65 secondary roads and three primary roads remain closed, which has extended bus transportation routes for public schools. The school district was closed November 7–12, which created a no-notice interruption in food assistance for all students in the county who receive free or reduced cost lunch.

**Bamberg County** residents reported floodwater entering homes that had not received water intrusion during previous events, including the historic 2015 flood. Residents awoke to find submerged streets and detours because of closed roadways. Challenges in repairing and recovering in Bamberg County are complicated by economic factors and repeat disaster events including Tropical Storm Debby and Hurricane Helene, plus a January 2024 tornado from which the county and the City of Bamberg are still recovering.

In **Calhoun County**, the county seat of St. Matthews saw 14.62 inches of rainfall, and the resulting flooding damaged 16 county roads. Calhoun County also recently experienced severe weather impacts from Hurricane Helene.



*Highway 6, Calhoun County*

### III. Public Assistance Information

The November flood event necessitated urgent response costs and caused significant infrastructure damage. With the deluge and resulting high water levels, damage to roads, bridges, and water infrastructure accounts for a large portion of the costs. The categories of damages experienced and validated are detailed below.

Category B, Emergency Protective Measures	\$141,165
Category C, Roads and Bridges	\$9,597,835
Category F, Utilities	\$1,687,813
Category G, Other	\$136,800

Additional details are provided in the enclosed PA PDA Summary.

### IV. Individual Assistance Information

The severe storm's heavy rain and flooding caused major damage to residences and to water infrastructure that serves residential areas. In the two counties for which an IA declaration is requested, the JPDA process confirmed 38 residences with major damage or that were destroyed. In addition to direct damage to residences, residents experienced water rescues, interrupted water supplies, and transportation and feeding disruptions.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, South Carolina's population was 5,118,425. The 4.7% unemployment rate in South Carolina for October 2024 (U.S. Department of Labor) was slightly higher than the national average of 4.2%, and the State ranks behind many other States in other relevant economic measures, including per-capita income. Statewide per-capita income is \$36,072 compared to the nationwide average of \$41,261 (U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2022 five-year estimates). The State's Total Taxable Resources ("TTR"), based on U.S. Department of the Treasury information, is \$327.4 billion (U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, 2023).

<i>Percentage of population</i>	<i>Below poverty level (where determined)</i>	<i>Households receiving government assistance (SNAP)</i>	<i>Pre-disaster unemployment rate</i>	<i>65 years and older</i>	<i>18 years and younger</i>	<i>With a disability</i>	<i>5 years and older who speak a language other than English</i>
<b>Data Source</b>	ACS 2022 (S1701)	ACS 2022 (S2201)	ACS 2022 (DP03)	ACS 2022 (S0101)	ACS 2022 (S0101)	ACS 2022 (S1810)	ACS 2022 (S1601)
<b>National Average</b>	12.5%	11.5%	5.3%	16.5%	21.4%	12.9%	22.0%
<b>State Average</b>	14.4%	10.5%	5.2%	18.2%	21.5%	14.3%	7.5%
<b>Jurisdictions requested for designation:</b>							
<b>Bamberg County</b>	22.3%	22.3%	11.0%	22.6%	18.9%	19.7%	3.0%
<b>Calhoun County</b>	18.7%	16.3%	7.3%	23.6%	18.7%	17.3%	4.1%
<b>Orangeburg County</b>	25.0%	19.8%	9.2%	20.3%	21.6%	13.9%	3.8%

Individual and household recovery from disaster is also impacted by demographic and socioeconomic factors. South Carolina uses social vulnerability indices to incorporate consideration of social vulnerability into mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities and programs. For the counties for which IA is requested, social vulnerability index (“SVI”) ratings (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) National Overall SVI, 2022) are reflected below:

<b>County</b>	<b>CDC SVI</b>
Bamberg County	0.958
Calhoun County	0.7273
Orangeburg County	0.9516

The two counties requested for IA include areas of high vulnerability to the impacts of an extreme flood event. In general, the higher the SVI number, the greater the area’s social vulnerability to the impacts of hazards. Based on the damage and the economic recovery needs of

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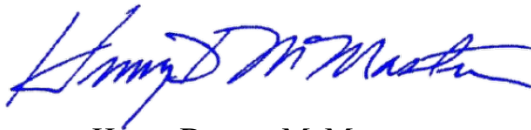
affected households and communities, I request the inclusion of all IA program components in the disaster declaration for Bamberg and Orangeburg Counties.

## V. Recent Disaster Impacts

The State of South Carolina has experienced 12 federally declared disasters since 2014, one incident declared as an emergency only, a fire management declaration, and multiple smaller events that were addressed using local and state resources. The State currently is in short- to intermediate-recovery stage due to Hurricane Helene, which represented the worst disaster to impact the State since Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The confluence of these events has collectively strained the capacity or ability of the State and local governments to respond to and recover from the damage caused by the heavy rains and flooding in early November. Counties most heavily impacted by the flood event also previously experienced damage and incurred corresponding costs from one or more recent storms, including the following hurricanes or tropical storms: Matthew (2016), Irma (2017), Florence (2018), Dorian (2019), Ian (2022), Idalia (2023) (emergency declaration), Debby (2024), and Helene (2024). Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (“VOADs”) continue to assist residents with damage and unmet needs from past years’ storms, and repeated emergencies and disasters are stretching capacity and resources.

On behalf of the people of the great State of South Carolina, thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and your assistance with this matter.

Yours very truly,



Henry Dargan McMaster

Enclosures: FEMA Form 010-0-13  
A: November 2024 Flood IHP Workbook Cost Estimates Summary  
B: November 2024 Flood PA JPDA Summary  
November Flood River Crests (National Weather Service)