



Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security News Release

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President Declares Major Disaster for Idaho Following Destructive Northern Idaho Windstorm

(Boise) President Barack H. Obama today approved Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter’s request for a major disaster declaration for Idaho. The Presidential Disaster Declaration clears the way for federal disaster assistance for four northern Idaho counties following an historic windstorm that caused widespread destruction and left tens of thousands of people without power for days.

“These were hurricane force winds that caused wide scale and extended blackouts,” said Governor Otter. “The level of destruction that happened in such a short time was widespread and significant and caused untold suffering and economic disruption.”

Benewah, Bonner, Boundary and Kootenai counties bore the brunt of the unprecedented November 17th windstorm that caused havoc throughout the Pacific and Interior Northwest. The weather service reported wind gusts measuring as high as 101 mph in Bonner County. Electric cooperatives serving individuals and businesses in the four county area including Kootenai Electric Coop, Northern Lights, Inc., Inland Power Coop and Clearwater Power Coop, sustained significant damage to infrastructure. Complete power restoration took more than a week, during which time citizens, businesses and agencies worked to find alternate resources for heating, cooking and lighting.

“The region was left in the dark for days creating austere conditions at a time of year when snowfall and below freezing temperatures are commonplace,” said Brad Richy, Director, Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. “This Presidential Disaster Declaration means federal funding will be made available to lessen the dire financial burden on taxpayers and power users. I commend the Governor’s office for requesting the declaration.”

A Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) related to significant destruction caused by the windstorms was completed earlier this month by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security and local officials. The process involved precise data collection regarding the damage. The PDA was the initial step in determining the magnitude and scope of the damage and Idaho’s subsequent eligibility for federal disaster assistance.

The windstorm was the worst natural disaster to affect Kootenai Electric Cooperative (KEC) in its history. More than 17-thousand of KEC's 24,500 members lost power during the windstorm. 100% of the 17-hundred plus Inland Power and Light customers within the affected area were without power during the storm. 12,000 of 18,000 customers of Northern Lights, Inc. were also without power. Additionally, 100% of Clearwater Power Cooperative's 2,480 customers lost power.

Note to reporters: *The Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security is the State of Idaho's emergency management agency. Please note that IBHS is an Idaho-specific agency, and it is not the same thing as the federal Department of Homeland Security. Within the State of Idaho organizational chart, IBHS is aligned under the State of Idaho Military Division.*