



## D 2023 019

### EXECUTIVE ORDER

#### **Declaring a Disaster Emergency Due to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding in Baca, Jefferson, Kiowa, Prowers, and Teller Counties**

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2, of the Colorado Constitution and the relevant portions of the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act, C.R.S § 24-33.5-701, *et seq.*, I, Jared Polis, Governor of the State of Colorado, issue this Executive Order declaring a state of disaster emergency due to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding in Baca, Jefferson, Kiowa, Prowers, and Teller Counties, enabling State and Federal agencies to coordinate for response, consequence management, mitigation, and recovery efforts.

#### **I. Background and Purpose**

The Governor is responsible for meeting the dangers to the State and people presented by disasters. C.R.S. § 24-33.5-704(1). The Colorado Disaster Emergency Act defines a disaster as “the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury or loss of life or property resulting from any natural cause or cause of human origin including but not limited to severe weather . . . .” C.R.S § 24-33.5-703(3).

Beginning June 8, 2023, and continuing through June 24, 2023, Colorado experienced a destructive and disruptive summer flood, flash flood, tornado, and severe weather season. The above average precipitation caused an increase in flash flooding to well above normal. Heavy rainfall, combined with saturated soils, caused washouts on county roads in multiple counties.

Excess rainfall created numerous washouts of roadways, hiking trails, and retaining walls. The massive amount of rain created sinkholes in multiple counties across the State, resulting in detours on major transportation routes. Drainage ditches became overwhelmed with water carrying debris into ponds, lakes, and rivers.

Over the course of two weeks, Colorado experienced at least 41 tornadoes of varying intensities, including two rated EF-3 on the Enhanced Fujita Tornado Rate Scale, causing extensive damage to trees and structures. Tornadoes were identified along the Front Range and on the Eastern Plains. Tornadoes in Baca and Prowers Counties destroyed homes and damaged electrical infrastructure. High winds in Kiowa County damaged electrical infrastructure. The

same weather system that created these tornadoes and high winds also caused hail damage to historical structures in Jefferson County.

On June 22, 2023, at approximately 4:45 PM, I verbally declared a disaster emergency due to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding in El Paso, Elbert, Lincoln, and Washington Counties and activated the State of Colorado Emergency Operations Plan. On July 18, 2023, at approximately 3:00 PM, after further assessments with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), I verbally extended the disaster emergency declaration and expanded the declaration to include Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Douglas, Kit Carson, and Logan Counties.

On July 18, 2023, I memorialized my verbal orders in Executive Order D 2023 011, declaring and extending a state of disaster emergency due to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding. My Executive Order allocated \$50,000,000 to pay for response, consequence management, mitigation, and recovery efforts related to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding.

After further investigation, it was determined that the damage from severe weather and flooding extended to counties not included in Executive Order D 2023 011. I am therefore declaring a disaster emergency to address severe weather impacts, including high winds, flooding, hail, and tornado damage in Baca, Jefferson, Kiowa, Prowers, and Teller Counties. These counties have sustained significant infrastructure damage from the severe weather events in June 2023. A roadway in Teller County was damaged by flooding. Baca, Prowers, and Kiowa Counties have sustained damage to electrical infrastructure, and Jefferson County buildings have sustained approximately \$3 million worth of uncovered hail damage.

## **II. Declarations and Directives**

- A. The June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding and associated impacts constitute a disaster emergency under C.R.S § 24-33.5-701, *et seq.*
- B. The State Emergency Operations Plan is hereby activated. All State departments and agencies shall take whatever actions required and requested by the Director or Acting Director of the Office of Emergency Management, pursuant to the State Emergency Operations Plan, including provision of appropriate staff and equipment, as necessary.
- C. I direct State agencies to pursue all available federal funding for response and recovery operations, including but not limited to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Small Business Administration, and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- D. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-33.5-706(4)(b), funds in the Disaster Emergency Fund (DEF) were insufficient to pay for response, consequence management, mitigation, and recovery efforts related to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding, as set out in Executive Order D 2023 011. Therefore, I order that the

fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) already encumbered in the DEF in Executive Order D 2023 011 be made available to pay for response, consequence management, mitigation, and recovery efforts related to the June 2023 Severe Weather and Flooding in Baca, Jefferson, Kiowa, Prowers, and Teller Counties. No additional funds beyond those originally encumbered in Executive Order D 2023 011 shall be encumbered by this Executive Order.

- E. I authorize and direct the Director of the Office of Emergency Management to allocate the funding described in Section II.D to the appropriate government agencies and non-profit organizations, procure personnel, goods, and services from any source as necessary to meet the needs of the disaster emergency, and execute awards, purchase orders, contracts, authorized special Commitment Voucher forms, or other mechanisms to effect the allocation of the funds.

### **III. Duration**

This Executive Order shall expire thirty (30) days from September 22, 2023, unless extended further by Executive Order, except that the funds described in Section II.D above shall remain available for the described purposes for thirty-six (36) months from the date of Executive Order D 2023 011.



GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this twenty-second day of September, 2023.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis".

Jared Polis  
Governor