



# State of Mississippi

TATE REEVES  
Governor

August 30, 2022

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

Through: Gracia B. Szczech, Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region IV  
3005 Chamblee Tucker Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

Re: City of Jackson and Hinds County Water Crisis

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§5121-5207 (the "Stafford Act"), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. §206.35, I request that you declare an emergency for the State of Mississippi due to the City of Jackson's and Hinds County's Water Crisis. This request is timely under 44 C.F.R. §206.35(a), and I submit this request to avoid devastating impacts on approximately 180,000 citizens in and around the Jackson Metro Area. Without water pressure, the fire-fighting capability of the City of Jackson and Hinds County will be severely diminished. The University of Mississippi Medical Center and Merit Health Central hospital are dependent on water for fire suppression and patient care. Additionally, citizens reliant on Jackson's water system will be without accessible water to drink, bathe, cook, clean, and flush. While the City of Jackson has had issues with its aged water system, the current situation is now critical and requires assistance from the federal government.

On March 27, 2020, the City of Jackson entered into a Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Emergency Administrative Order (EAO) which required the City of Jackson to (1) develop and implement a plan to address all monitoring equipment and appurtenant treatment equipment repairs and/or replacements; (2) address the dosing processes for disinfection and pH control; (3) develop and implement a plan to provide alternative drinking water when triggers are met; and (4) take additional total coliform bacteria samples under prescribed conditions.

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In February 2021, the City of Jackson experienced a system-wide failure due to extreme winter conditions that caused pipes to freeze and lose pressure leaving many areas without water for several weeks. On July 1, 2021, the City of Jackson entered into an SDWA Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) to address concerns identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). On July 29, 2022, the City of Jackson issued its most recent Boil Water Notice based on water samples that showed high turbidity levels. The City of Jackson has remained under this Boil Water Notice for more than thirty (30) days. Finally, beginning on August 25, 2022, and continuing, excessive rainfall and extreme flooding created a water system emergency in the Jackson Metro Area, including a temporary decrease in water production at the O.B. Curtis Water Plant.

The Mississippi Department of Health also declared a public drinking supply emergency based on the following: (1) Insufficient number of certified operators at the two water treatment plants; (2) Insufficient number of maintenance staff at the treatment plants to support the distribution system; (3) Failure of multiple raw water pumps at O.B. Curtis Water Treatment Plant; (4) Low levels of water in storage tank; (5) Low water pressure impacting proper sanitation and education opportunities; and (6) Disinfection levels not consistently optimal developing the potential to have the presence of enteric organisms, including but not limited to, E.coli, Cryptosporidium, or Giardia in the drinking water being served to customers.

The total or near total loss of water pressure throughout the City of Jackson and surrounding areas of Hinds County has created a condition of disaster and extreme peril to the safety of persons and property. This peril is of such magnitude that services, personnel, equipment, and facilities are above the capabilities of the City, County, and State. In response to the current situation, I have taken the appropriate action under state law by directing the execution of the State's emergency management plan and declaring a state of emergency on August 30, 2022. Additionally, I have deployed state assets, including Area Coordinators, Disaster Reservists, and the Mississippi Department of Health, to the impacted area. I am preparing to mobilize the Department of Transportation, Public Utilities, the Mississippi National Guard, and Department of Public Safety to assist in life-safety efforts.

I anticipate that emergency actions will be ongoing until the water pumps at the O.B. Curtis Water Treatment Plant are brought back into service and water pressure restored to the impacted residents. At that time, I intend to withdraw the agencies listed above and allow the City of Jackson to maintain its system.

### **DISASTER HISTORY**

Since 2020, eight (8) major disasters and four (4) emergency declaration events have afflicted Mississippi. The following list summarizes those events:

**FEMA 4478** – Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding – Declared March 12, 2020. The following 13 counties were declared: Bolivar, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Desoto,

Oktibbeha, Panola, Prentiss, Quitman, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tishomingo, and Washington. On January 10, 2020, this event brought severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and seventeen (17) confirmed tornadoes to the northern part of the State. Twenty-nine (29) counties reported damages, twenty (20) counties, and four (4) cities filed local proclamations of emergency. The storm caused twenty-one (21) injuries and one (1) death in the impacted area. Out of the initial twenty-nine (29) counties reporting damages, twenty-eight (28) applicants have submitted R.P.A.s, seventy-three (73) project worksheets are in various stages of development, and the Damage Assessment amount for this storm was approximately \$8 million.

**FEMA 4528** – COVID 19 – Declared April 5, 2020 – Statewide. On March 12, 2020, the SEOC moved to Level 1 status in response to COVID-19. Coupled with all previous events, this unprecedented event's response and mitigation measures have exhausted the State's workforce capability. Currently, the SEOC is at Level 2 for the continued response to this event, and over 433 entities have submitted R.P.A.s. Due to this event's nature, the total amount of applications, project worksheets, and costs exceed the workforce capability to respond appropriately. As of August 30, 2022, over 905,000 Mississippians have been diagnosed with COVID-19, and 12,766 have died. During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, shelter operations required that Mississippi consider additional strategies to ensure that survivors are sheltered in a manner that does not increase the risk of exposure to or further transmission of COVID-19.

**FEMA 4536** – Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding – Declared April 16, 2020. The following 20 counties were declared: Bolivar, Calhoun, Carroll, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Coahoma, Covington, Grenada, Holmes, Jasper, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leake, Montgomery, Noxubee, Panola, and Quitman. On Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, two (2) rounds of severe weather, including destructive tornadoes, hail, damaging winds, thunderstorms, and heavy rain, struck Mississippi, impacting one-third of the State. The National Weather Service in Jackson confirmed that multiple EF-5 tornadoes struck portions of Covington, Jefferson Davis, and Jones Counties on Easter Sunday, reaching an estimated wind speed above 200 miles per hour. These tornadoes tracked a half-mile wide and over 100 miles long through multiple counties. Twelve (12) Mississippians lost their lives in this storm. At present, there are 64 applicants, and project worksheets are under development. The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments yielded approximately \$35 million in damages.

**FEMA 4538** – Severe Storms, Flooding, and Mudslides – Declared April 23, 2020. The following 15 counties were declared: Attala, Carroll, Claiborne, Clay, Copiah, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Leflore, Marion, Sharkey, Warren, Wilkinson, and Yazoo. When these storms entered Mississippi, they brought tremendous amounts of rain over four days, with up to 10" of rain coming down quickly in ten (10) counties. This deluge rapidly made its way in the Ross Barnett Reservoir next to the City of Jackson and resulted in a maximum outflow of the reservoir into the Pearl River. This massive release of water resulted in catastrophic flooding downstream. Twenty-seven (27) counties submitted initial damage reports from February 10 through February 18, 2020. Of the

twenty-seven (27) counties reporting damages, twenty (20) counties and six (6) cities filed local proclamations of emergency. Local governments reported four (4) injuries in the impacted area, and the Small Business Administration (S.B.A.) granted a declaration for this event. At present, there are twenty-one (21) applicants, and the project worksheets are under development. The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments yielded approximately \$10 million in damages.

**FEMA 4551** – Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, and Flooding. Submitted request for Major Federal Declaration on June 5, 2020. The following 11 counties were declared: Amite, Claiborne, Covington, George, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lawrence, Pike, Simpson, Smith, and Wayne. Severe storms and powerful tornadoes entered Mississippi on April 22 and caused enough significant destruction for twenty (20) counties to report damages. Eleven (11) counties and five (5) cities filed local proclamations, and three (3) people were injured. The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments yielded approximately \$8 million in damages.

**FEMA 4576** – Hurricane Zeta. Major Disaster declared on December 31, 2020. The following counties were declared for Individual Assistance: George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, and Stone. Public Assistance was declared for George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Perry, Stone, and Wayne. Hurricane Zeta impacted the State on October 28-29, caused \$50M in debris and infrastructure damage, and damaged thousands of homes.

**FEMA 4598** – Severe Winter Storms. A Major Disaster was declared on May 4, 2021, for 31 counties and one Tribe: Adams, Attala, Choctaw, Claiborne, Copiah, Covington, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Kemper, Lafayette, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lincoln, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Tallahatchie, Walthall, Warren, Winston, Yazoo, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. This winter storm caused approximately \$30M in debris and infrastructure damage.

**FEMA 4626** – Hurricane Ida. A Major Disaster was declared on October 22, 2021, for 19 counties: Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Covington, Franklin, George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Pearl River, Pike, Simpson, Walthall, Wayne and Wilkinson. This storm caused approximately \$27M in debris and infrastructure damage.

**EM 3539** – Mississippi Hurricane Marco and Tropical Storm Laura. Submitted request for Pre-Landfall Declaration on August 28, 2020. The following 24 counties were declared: Adams, Amite, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, Wayne, and Wilkinson. Hurricane Marco and Tropical Storm Laura did not directly impact Mississippi, and minimal costs were incurred.

**EM 3544** – Hurricane Sally. Submitted request for Pre-Landfall Declaration on September 13, 2020. The following 24 counties were declared: Adams, Amite, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, Wayne, and Wilkinson. As a Category

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B declaration, the State recently conducted the Applicant Briefing and receiving Requests for Public Assistance.

**EM 3548** – Hurricane Delta. Submitted request for Pre-Landfall Declaration on October 7, 2020. The following three counties were declared for Category B emergency protective measures, including Direct Federal Assistance: Hancock, Harrison, and Wilkinson. The following counties were authorized Category B emergency protective measures, limited to Direct Federal Assistance: Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Forrest, Franklin, George, Hinds, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Pearl River, Pike, Rankin, Stone, Walthall, Warren, and Yazoo. As a Category B declaration, the State recently conducted the Applicant Briefing and receiving Requests for Public Assistance.

**EM 3569** – Hurricane Ida. Pre-Landfall Declaration was approved on August 28, 2021. As a Category B declaration, all 82 counties were declared.

The total or near total loss of water pressure throughout the City of Jackson and surrounding areas can result in substantial injury or harm to the population and significant damage to or loss of property. I specifically request an emergency declaration for Public Assistance – Category B, including Direct Federal Assistance.

The State of Mississippi is determined to recover from this water crisis. Mississippi is prepared to expend funds in response to this disaster; however, federal assistance is necessary due to the severity and magnitude of the disaster. Coupled with ongoing recovery efforts related to the above-referenced disasters of 2020-2022, as well as COVID-19, Mississippi will not be able to recover without the aid of the federal government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tate Reeves". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

Tate Reeves  
Governor

Enclosures