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EXECUTIVE ORDER

Declaring a Disaster Emergency Due to a Severe Winter Storm

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to relevant portions of the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act, §§ 24-32-2100 *et seq.*, C.R.S. I, Bill Owens, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order declaring a state of disaster emergency due to a severe winter storm.

1. Background and Need

Between March 17, 2003 and March 20, 2003, a powerful blizzard covered most of Colorado. This was one of largest snowstorms in Colorado's history. The Denver metro area received over two and one half feet of snow while many suburbs received much more. Numerous locations throughout the state received over six feet of snow.

As a result of the heavy snowfall, roads and highways became increasingly dangerous for motorists. Many travelers were unable to reach their destinations and local emergency personnel were overwhelmed by the task of rescuing stranded motorists. In several situations, emergency vehicles were not capable of navigating the dangerous roads to reach the vehicles. With increasing snowfall and dropping temperatures this became a dangerous situation for the trapped motorists. In addition, this situation restricted emergency vehicles from responding to calls and reaching individuals in need of medical attention.

As Governor, I am responsible for meeting the dangers to the state and people presented by disasters. The Colorado Disaster Emergency Act (hereinafter the "Act"), defines a disaster as "the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damages, injury or loss of life or property resulting from any natural cause or cause of human origin, including but not limited to...storm." C.R.S. § 24-32-2103(1.5). As detailed above, this snowstorm posed an imminent danger to human life and, therefore, constituted a disaster for the purposes of the Act.

In response to this disaster, I ordered certain elements of the Colorado National Guard to active duty to assist with emergency response as a result of the snowstorm. Specifically, I authorized the activation of National Guard troops and the use of emergency equipment. The Colorado Office of Emergency Management estimates that 39 soldiers were called to active duty and 5 Snow Utility Vehicles and 13 Humvees were utilized in the assignment. These crews coordinated with local authorities to rescue stranded motorists, guide emergency vehicles to urgent situations and deliver individuals in need of emergency care to hospitals.

2. Mission and Scope

- A. I hereby declare that this snowstorm constituted a disaster for purposes of C.R.S. §24-32-2103, and acknowledge my earlier verbal order declaring a statewide disaster emergency, activating the State Emergency Operations Plan and activating certain elements of the Colorado National Guard.
- B. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2106, I order the encumbrance of up to \$50,000 from the State Disaster Emergency Fund to pay for Colorado National Guard personnel and equipment used to assist in this disaster emergency response effort. These funds shall remain available for this purpose for six months from the date of this Executive Order.
- C. The Director of the Colorado Office of Emergency Management is hereby authorized and directed to coordinate application to the federal government for any funds for public assistance disaster relief and for other funding related to the disaster emergency.
- D. All verbal orders that I issued in regards to this disaster emergency, including my disaster emergency declaration on March 19, 2003, is hereby memorialized by this Executive Order and shall have the full force and effect of law as if they were contained within this Executive Order.

3. Duration

This Executive Order shall expire thirty days from its date of signature unless extended by Executive Order.

Given under my hand and
the Executive Seal of the
State of Colorado this 26th
day of March, 2003.

Bill Owens
Governor