

February 24, 2011
The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We respectfully request that you declare a Major Disaster for the State of New Mexico for Public Assistance as a result of the severe winter storm and related loss of essential natural gas home heating service throughout New Mexico.

Starting on February 1, New Mexico experienced an extended period of extreme cold, as low at -30 degrees Fahrenheit in some areas, which set records throughout the state. These extreme cold temperatures impacted critical natural gas infrastructure, causing a severe shortage of natural gas in New Mexico starting early on February 3 and led to the loss of central heating to over 28,000 families, businesses, and public facilities. First responders were stretched to the limit, over 20 shelters were set up throughout the state, and frozen pipes caused significant damage to public buildings and critical public water supply infrastructure.

On February 3, Governor Susana Martinez declared a State of Emergency for New Mexico. On February 23, she requested a federal disaster declaration for public assistance to cover approximately \$4.6 million in documented costs to governments and public infrastructure in the following counties: Taos, Bernalillo, Doña Ana, Rio Arriba, Socorro, Otero, Sandoval, Sierra, and Lincoln. In addition, the request includes the following Tribal governments: Taos Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo, Santa Ana Pueblo, San Felipe Pueblo, and the Mescalero Apache Tribe. If granted, state, local and tribal governments will receive federal resources to help recover from the disaster and conduct mitigation to prevent further damages in the future. The request for the federal disaster declaration did not include a request for individual assistance.

Once again, we respectfully request you to quickly declare a Major Disaster for Public Assistance in the State of New Mexico. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request, and if we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeff Bingaman
Senator Tom Udall
Congressman Martin Heinrich
Congressman Steve Pearce
Congressman Ben Ray Luján