

Gov. Beshear Announces Successful Bipartisan Effort to Reopen Northern Kentucky State Medical Examiner's Office

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 6, 2021) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear announced that, through a bipartisan effort, funding has been appropriated for the Office of the State Medical Examiner (OSME) to reopen its Northern Kentucky office.

“This was truly a bipartisan effort, led by Sen. McDaniel, and demonstrates the imperative need for such essential services in this region,” said Gov. Beshear. “As your Governor, I recognize that staffing and funding are ongoing issues for this office, and the bipartisan collaborative success of HB 382 shows that both the Legislature and the Executive Branch are on the same page about tackling such issues.”

The Northern Kentucky medical examiner's office has been closed since March 2018.

The General Assembly passed House Bill 382 on Tuesday, March 30. Last week, the Governor signed the bill, which dedicates \$1.8 million in one-time funds for fiscal year 2022 and more than \$1.5 million in continuation funds.

“So many of our vital services are many times unnoticed, but the loss of the medical examiner's office in Northern Kentucky was becoming a large problem,” said Sen. Chris McDaniel of Taylor Mill. “I appreciate working with Gov. Beshear and the state medical examiner's office to return this important service to Northern Kentucky.”

Reopening this office will also have positive impacts throughout the commonwealth. Without this office, cases from Northern Kentucky are sent throughout the state, increasing caseloads on existing regional medical examiner's offices that are already over capacity.

“This means that we can process more cases with quicker turnaround, which will help Kentuckians take important next steps in their time of grief and loss,” said Chief Medical Examiner Dr. William Ralston. “A shortage of medical examiners in the state contributes to delays in local cases and response times for county coroners to receive completed autopsy reports. County coroners are unable to sign death certificates until autopsy reports are completed, and without signed death certificates, families are often unable to begin taking care of personal matters.”

The mission of the OSME is to serve all Kentuckians by providing accurate, thorough and efficient medicolegal investigations of death, thereby ensuring justice and providing solace, comfort and protection to the living. The office also addresses public health impacts by identifying diseases and hazards that potentially could put Kentuckians at risk.

In 2020, the state medical examiner's office completed 2,851 examinations and were involved in well over 5,000 death investigations statewide.

The Northern Kentucky location will provide year-round accessibility and anticipates receiving well over 500 examinations annually. For grieving families in the region, it will reduce the need to transport their deceased loved ones 100 miles or more to the Louisville office for examination and back home before a funeral and burial, saving families time and money. Law enforcement and other investigators will also save associated expenses and resources.

President Approves Gov. Beshear's Request for Major Disaster Declaration

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 1, 2021) – Less than two weeks after Gov. Andy Beshear requested a major disaster declaration from the federal government, President Joe Biden approved the request late Wednesday and ordered federal assistance to support Kentucky communities with recovery from devastating winter storms.

“This declaration will make sure Kentuckians and our communities have the necessary resources to rebuild after the devastating ice storm that hit in February,” Gov. Beshear said. “Thank you to President Biden and FEMA for their assistance, and thank you to the many state and local agencies and organizations who are leading the recovery and rebuilding efforts in our hard-hit communities.”

President Biden issued a Major Disaster Declaration in response to Gov. Beshear's March 19 request for assistance for the severe winter storms that impacted Kentucky from February 8 through February 19, 2021. The Governor issued a State of Emergency Order on February 11, 2021. Fifty-nine counties and 38 cities likewise issued local state of emergency orders.

The President ordered federal assistance to supplement recovery efforts by the commonwealth and local communities affected by the severe weather. Federal funding is available to the commonwealth, to eligible local governments and to certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures.

The weather system produced heavy rain, hail, sleet, freezing rain, ice and bitter arctic air, which caused impassable roadways, massive power outages, water system failures, landslides, mudslides and disruption of critical government services.

The ice storm produced from the system left 154,500 Kentucky homes without power at the height of the event. There were four (4) confirmed casualties attributed to the event.

The Kentucky National Guard was activated, with 90 personnel assisting with the clearing of roadways, evacuating at-risk citizens and conducting wellness checks.

Gov. Beshear and Senior Advisor Rocky Adkins visited Eastern Kentucky in February to view the damage, meet with local leaders on the emergency response efforts and talk to those most affected, including those at the warming center at the Boyd County Community Center in Catlettsburg.

The federal Disaster Declaration includes public assistance for the counties of Bath, Boyd, Boyle, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Garrard, Greenup, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Lewis, Lincoln, Madison, Magoffin, Marion, Martin, McCreary, Menifee, Mercer, Morgan, Montgomery, Nicholas, Nelson, Owsley, Perry, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Wayne, Whitley and Wolfe. Damages assessed by state, local and federal representatives are projected to exceed \$30 million. A request for additional counties may follow as damage assessments are ongoing.

“We appreciate President Biden's timely award of a major disaster declaration, in response to Gov. Beshear's request of March 19,” said Michael Dossett, director of Kentucky Emergency Management. “With the federal assistance, our counties and power utilities will be able to repair the catastrophic damages to our electrical infrastructure as a result of the February severe weather and ice storm event.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Program will provide funding to eligible applicants for allowable costs associated with debris removal, emergency protective actions and restoration of impacted infrastructure.

In addition, all areas in the Commonwealth of Kentucky are eligible for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which provides assistance for actions taken to prevent or reduce long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards.

In the separate incidence of record flooding across the commonwealth, FEMA has completed damage assessments of over 2,100 homes examining requests for federal support of individual assistance. FEMA is in the last phase of reviewing damage assessments for impacts to over 40 county infrastructures. Gov. Beshear will submit an application for a second federal disaster declaration immediately upon learning of completion of the findings.

Residents with questions or additional reports of flood damage should contact their local county emergency management agency.

Congressman Rogers Applauds Presidential Disaster Declaration for February Ice Storms

WASHINGTON, DC - On Wednesday, President Joe Biden issued a Major Disaster Declaration in response to the deadly ice storms in February that left behind costly damages and extended power outages across Kentucky. The declaration comes less than two weeks after Kentucky's Congressional Delegation urged President Biden to activate federal aid for the Commonwealth, a request issued by Governor Andy Beshear.

“Our small county governments have been working on overdrive since early February to remove debris and repair roads, water and sewer lines, and other facilities that were damaged during the ice storms. This declaration provides emergency federal funding through FEMA to help pay for repairs and reimburse those unexpected costs that have been draining local county budgets,” said Congressman Rogers.

Federal funding is available for the Commonwealth and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe winter storms, landslides, and mudslides in the counties of Bath, Boyd, Boyle, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Garrard, Greenup, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Lewis, Lincoln, Madison, Magoffin, Marion, Martin, McCreary, Menifee, Mercer, Montgomery, Morgan, Nicholas, Nelson, Owsley, Perry, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe. Funding will also be available through hazard mitigation grants to help prevent damage from future storms.

The lingering ice storms also contributed to the severity of historic flooding that began on February 28, 2021. According to Governor Beshear, FEMA has completed damage assessments of more than 2,100 homes and is in the last phase of reviewing impacts to over 40 county infrastructures. Kentucky's Congressional Delegation stands ready to support the Governor's second request for a Major Disaster Declaration.

“With more than 2,100 homes impacted by recent flooding, it will be detrimental for federal assistance to be available to help families rebuild and replace what they have lost in Eastern Kentucky,” said Congressman Rogers. “I was honored to help deliver donations and cleaning supplies to our hardest-hit counties, but long-term flood relief efforts will require emergency home loans and continued support.”

WORKING ON AN OUTDOOR PROJECT?

By taking these important steps BEFORE you break ground - you can help protect not only yourself but our community. Disrupting an underground utility line can interrupt service, cause injuries, and cost money to repair.

-- Always call 8-1-1 first and know what's below --



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



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