

DAILY DART

WSP USA INSPECTION SERVICES DISASTER AWARENESS REPORT

January 19, 2024

Atmospheric River Storms

West Coast

- Rounds of storms will target the West Coast into early next week, including several of the atmospheric river variety.
- The first storm and atmospheric river arrived late Thursday, bringing Oregon the third round of freezing rain this week, including the Portland Metro area. After that storm, California will get a fire hose of rain through Tuesday while the Pacific Northwest gets a glancing blow.
- Weather models show storms getting a tropical connection, which means heavier rain and snow but warmer temperatures.
- As the first storm moves off Friday morning, a second and larger atmospheric river storm makes landfall late Sunday. A potential third and fourth follows later in the week.
- "The second and third ARs are forecast to bring precipitation to the (West Coast), with the heaviest precipitation expected from the second AR over the California coast and in the Sierra Nevada, where heavy snowfall is forecast through Tuesday," wrote forecasters at the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes (CW3E).
- The CW3E said a potential fourth AR could bring heavy rain and snow with high winds to the Pacific Northwest between next Thursday and Saturday.
- As the atmospheric rivers are generally warmer storms, snow levels are expected to rise with rain falling on fresh snow from this week to exacerbate inland flooding concerns.
- Heavy rains on Saturday into Sunday will make flash flooding likely along the coast and coastal ranges from southern Oregon along much of California to almost Los Angeles.



FEMA News

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is changing the way it responds to natural disasters, it announced Friday, as the climate crisis fuels more extreme weather events and causes more destruction to people's homes.
- FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell told reporters on Thursday that the uptick in extreme weather called for a faster and more streamlined assistance program.

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- Criswell described the changes as the “most comprehensive update to our individual assistance program in 20 years.” She said the changes were the result of a huge amount of feedback from survivors, organizations that work in disaster recovery, and elected officials.
- Under previous rules, homeowners who had received payments from their insurance company for home repairs but not enough to cover all of the damage were essentially out of luck when it came to getting help from FEMA. Now those homeowners can apply to FEMA for help. Criswell gave an example of a homeowner who has \$80,000 in damage but receives only \$45,000 from the insurance company. Previously, FEMA couldn't help them because their insurance payout already exceeded the agency's assistance cap of \$42,500 per disaster. Now, that same homeowner can get money from the agency to make up the difference. This rule change comes at a time when homeowners in places like Louisiana, Florida and California are facing skyrocketing deductibles and fights with insurance companies over damage assessments that have made it difficult even for people with insurance to recover from hurricanes or wildfires.
- The agency has had something called critical needs assistance, currently \$750, that survivors can use for whatever they need right after a disaster: baby formula or food, for example. But states or tribal nations had to specifically request that category of assistance, and it was only done on a case-by-case basis. Now, anytime a disaster is declared that includes FEMA's individual assistance funding stream, those \$750 payments will be available. Survivors still have to apply, and there is some vetting to prevent fraud. But it bypasses the application that states and tribal nations had to make. That doesn't mean that every disaster will include these payments. Many declared disasters are more limited in scope.
- Disaster survivors with disabilities can use FEMA money to make changes to their homes to make them more accessible, whereas under previous rules the agency would only pay to rebuild things that had been damaged in the disaster. People with pre-existing problems in their home, like a leaky roof, can now get money from the agency to fix the house. Currently, the agency requires that if it is giving people money to fix something, it had to have worked before the disaster.
- And FEMA is creating a new category of aid called displacement assistance, designed to help those who can't return to their home. It gives them money for housing while they're looking for a long-term rental and has flexibility so that they can, for example, use the money to pay a friend's utilities if they're crashing on a couch.
- The new rules go into effect March 22.

Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments

State	Event	Number of Counties for IA		Start-End
		Requested	Completed	
FL	Severe Storms & Tornadoes Jan 8-12	3	3	1/16-1/18

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Pending Individual Assistance Declaration Request

State	Event	Date Submitted	Approved/Denied/ Pending	Number of Counties
MI*	Severe Storms, Tornadoes & Flooding Aug 24-26	10/18/2023	Pending	9 Counties

*Award of task order to contractor pending

WSP USA Inspection Services Active Disasters

Disaster Number and State	Disaster Type	Number of Counties Declared	Days Since Launch	Registration Deadline
4749 IL	Flooding	1 County	56	1/19/2024

WSP USA INSPECTION SERVICES ACTIVITY

