

**Draft News Release Approval Block**

**Release No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Subject** \_\_\_\_\_ **DR1360MS**

**FCO** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mary Hudak** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCO** \_\_\_\_\_ **Program approval** \_\_\_\_\_

**State PIO** \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**Writer** \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT**

**GOVERNOR REQUESTS EXPANDED DISASTER DECLARATION**

**JACKSON, MS** – Gov. Ronnie Musgrove Monday asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to expand the state’s winter storm disaster declaration to bring state and federal assistance to a total of 34 counties damaged in violent storms Feb. 16 and 24.

John Hannah, the FEMA official responsible for coordinating federal disaster assistance programs with the state, said assessments of damage are being made in the named counties and a decision would be made soon. “We will move as quickly as we can to determine what the needs are in these counties,” said Hannah.

Leon Shaifer of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the official in charge of state recovery programs, said all citizens in the named counties who suffered uninsured property damage or loss should immediately register for disaster assistance by calling FEMA’s toll-free line, **1-800-462-9029**. (The number is **1-800-462-7585** for those with hearing or speech impediments).

The governor asked that Lee, Leflore, Bolivar, Pontotoc, Prentiss and Tallahatchie counties, which were damaged on the 24<sup>th</sup>, be added to the original disaster declaration signed by President Bush covering storm damage to homes and businesses in Holmes, Oktibbeha and Lowndes counties on the 16th.

Musgrove also asked that the following contiguous counties be designated: Yazoo, Madison, Attala, Carroll, Humphreys, Clay, Webster, Choctaw, Winston, Noxubee, Monroe, Itawaba, Chickasaw, Calhoun, Lafayette, Union, Tippah, Alcorn, Tishomingo, Grenada, Yalobusha, Panola, Quitman, Coahoma and Sunflower.