

Governor's Office/MEMA
Press Conference
Presidential Disaster Declaration
Tuesday, February 20, 2001
11:00 a.m.
Capitol Rotunda

Talking Points

- As you all know, the State of Mississippi experienced some extremely severe weather on Friday, February 16, 2001.
- As soon as the severe weather hit, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency became fully operational to give 24-hour a day assistance to local officials and people with damaged homes, businesses and property in the affected areas.
- Within a very short period of time of the storm, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency had disaster assessment team members on the scene in Holmes, Lowndes and Oktibbeha Counties helping local emergency officials get the assistance they needed to quickly repair their communities, towns and cities.
- We were fortunate to have local emergency management officials in the storm- damaged

counties who helped us effectively manage the disaster situation.

- Saturday morning, Robert Latham, General Lipscomb and I visited the damaged areas to see what else could be done to meet the needs of our people.
- I was pleased to see state and local officials working together to make the best use of available resources that could help restore normalcy to the lives of the families who have been displaced by the storm.
- It is difficult to look into the faces of a family whose home has been damaged or destroyed.
- They have a sense of loss – a loss of property and a loss of control of their lives.
- Our job is to help them rebuild as quickly as possible.
- That is why we have responded rapidly within the storm damaged areas by completing joint damage assessments with the Federal Emergency

Management Agency and Small Business Administration.

- They have reported to me that hundreds of homes and numerous businesses and individual properties have experienced damage throughout the area.
- Widespread power outages have caused extensive disruption to water and sewer services, home heating, food preparation and commercial enterprises.
- The storm damage left more than 42,000 customers without power, and although a massive effort has been underway to restore service, 6,700 customers still remain without electrical service.
- In just a few moments I will sign a letter to President Bush requesting a Presidential Disaster of Declaration under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.
- We are furnishing President Bush with damage assessments, which shows need for both individual and public assistance.

- Recovery from the storm is still underway, and people will be rebuilding for quite some time.
- We are continuing to work with local officials to ensure that every person, every family receives the assistance they need to return their lives to normal.
- I would like to thank Robert Latham, the staff of MEMA, local emergency directors, local elected officials, the Mississippi National Guard, the Mississippi Highway Patrol, city and county employees, FEMA, SBA and the countless volunteers who are helping our people put their lives back together.
- A disaster such as this can strike anywhere at anytime.
- There is no rhyme or reason to the path it can take or the destruction it can cause.
- Thanks to the efforts of Robert Latham, and the MEMA staff, we are making sure that our communities are better prepared to respond to any disaster that may occur in Mississippi.

- I would like to ask Robert Latham to come forward to say a few words.