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Governor Walker Directs State Efforts to Assist Residents of Barron, Jackson, and Rusk Counties

Madison – Governor Scott Walker issued a [State of Emergency](#) earlier this week following his survey of the damage near Chetek, where one person was killed and 25 people were injured after devastating storms in Barron, Jackson, and Rusk counties. Heavy rains in parts of west central and northwestern Wisconsin caused damage to roads and other infrastructure in the area.

“We stand ready to provide much needed assistance to those affected by the storms as they recover and rebuild,” Governor Walker said. “The coordinated response of the Wisconsin National Guard, Wisconsin Emergency Management, and all state agencies will help the residents impacted by the severe weather as they work to repair the damage in the area.”

As a part of the State of Emergency, Governor Walker asked all state agencies to review their programs for assistance tools to aid in response and recovery efforts for those affected by the severe weather.

The Department of Administration (DOA) has Community Development Block Grants – Emergency Assistance Program (CDBG-EAP) housing assistance available to eligible homeowners and tenants whose primary residence has been affected by a natural or man-made disaster event. CDBG-EAP housing assistance is awarded as a grant not a loan to the community that administers the program.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) issued a press release: [Spring Storm Damage Draws Transient Contractors](#). They are also assisting the land conservation departments in Barron, Jackson and Rusk counties to evaluate/review any conservation structures that may have been damaged in the storms, as well as several other counties in their area that had significant rainfall events to see if they need engineering assistance.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is working with victims of natural disasters to determine eligibility for assistance to find housing under the Emergency Assistance program, provided persons meet all of the Emergency Assistance eligibility requirements. The W-2 agency for the area, Workforce Resources Inc. (WRI), will have a team in Rice Lake on Friday, May 19 taking applications for Emergency Assistance from tornado victims, either in person or remotely via Skype. WRI is working with the Barron County Department of Human Services, which can offer other assistance such as emergency Food Share benefits.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) offers an online [Tornado toolkit for public health and first responders](#) as well as a [severe storm safety page](#) to provide residents with tips on preparing for severe weather.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has storm debris clean-up information available on this DNR web page: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waste/stormdebris.html>. DNR Forestry units have been out since the night the storm hit assisting tree and limb removal. They are also responding to a request to support an Incident Management Team (IMT) for volunteer efforts this weekend (Friday-Sunday) by Barron County.

The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has the ability to expedite commercial building plan review through the Department for rebuilding purposes.

The Department of Tourism is preparing communications and marketing plans to remind visitors that northern Wisconsin's tourism industry remains open for business and encourage visitors to call ahead to confirm conditions rather than cancel vacation plans.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is providing damage assessment assistance and help with Disaster Damage Aids reimbursements as requested. They are also working to repair damage to State Highway 121 due to flooding, which they anticipate should be completed before the weekend. The State Patrol Northwest Region deployed resources to assist Barron and Rusk counties in recovery efforts. State Patrol is monitoring flood areas and patrolling storm damaged areas to assist local law enforcement and motorists as needed.

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Unemployment Insurance (UI) program stands ready to assist workers who are out of work as a result of the storms and are eligible for regular state UI benefits. More information about the state's UI program is available [online](#).

The Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) issued a press release: [Commissioner Nickel Statement Following Severe Weather in Wisconsin](#). In dealing with the aftermath of the storms, the OCI recommends individuals to: notify their insurance agent or insurance company as soon as possible to begin filing a claim, separate damaged items from undamaged items and make a detailed list of all damaged or lost personal property. If individuals have a specific complaint about their insurance, they should refer it first to the insurance company or agent involved. If satisfactory answers are not received they may contact OCI at 1-800-236-8517 or ocicomplaints@wisconsin.gov.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) continues to monitor outage restoration with Xcel.

Wisconsin Emergency Management administers the Wisconsin Disaster Fund (WDF) which is a state-funded reimbursement program intended to assist county, local and tribal units of government ("the applicant") recoup costs incurred in responding to, and recovering from, natural disasters. The state reimburses up to 70 percent of eligible costs, with the local government responsible for the remaining share. The fund does not cover losses suffered by individuals, businesses or the agricultural sector, or those covered by insurance. It also does not provide management or administrative costs for the applicants. Wisconsin Emergency Management continues to work with local officials on recovery efforts.

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