



# **Gov. Pritzker Issues State Disaster Proclamation Following Significant Storm Damage in Cook, Lake Counties**

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Springfield, Ill. – Governor JB Pritzker has issued a state disaster proclamation for Cook and Lake Counties to help communities recover from the January 10<sup>th</sup> winter storm that caused substantial property damage along more than 30 miles of the Lake Michigan shoreline. The declaration is the first step to allow municipalities to apply for federal funding as they respond to and recover from the effects of severe storms and flooding.

“In the wake of another devastating disaster, I have directed all state agencies to help local communities recover and rebuild,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “This recent storm brought 23-foot waves onto shoreline areas in the City of Chicago. Critical infrastructure was destroyed, impacting roads, residential neighborhoods and recreational areas. State officials are working hand-in-hand with local governments to find short-term relief and permanent solutions to preserve this natural resource and the economic viability of our iconic shoreline.”

“One of Chicago’s strongest assets is our lakeshore, and due to the severity of recent storms we’ve witnessed irreparable damage to our lakefront beaches and infrastructure,” said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. “While the City has worked extensively over the past few months to respond to the damage and to secure the infrastructure and beaches along our lakefront - it is clear that this is a challenge we can't solve alone. To respond to the immediate challenges facing our lakefront as highlighted by the storm on January 10 - 11, we have declared disaster status to ensure Chicago receives the supports needed for addressing the scope of this issue for the long term. We remain committed to working with all stakeholders at the state and federal level in order to protect and preserve this vital piece of Chicago’s landscape.”

“The devastating effects of climate change are ravaging our Lake Michigan shoreline,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “This declaration is critical to our

ability to access funds to mitigate the damage our shoreline and communities are sustaining.”

The January 10<sup>th</sup> storm that battered Cook and Lake County delivered rain, snow, ice and winds in excess of 50 miles per hour. Significant flooding resulted in the closure of several main thoroughfares in the City of Chicago and grounded thousands of flights at O’Hare International Airport. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) expects Lake Michigan levels to remain high over the next several months. Future storms that produce high waves and strong winds could further impact shoreline erosion. Motorists and pedestrians are urged to exercise caution in the affected areas, allow for extra travel time and adhere to all closure and detour notices.

At this time, Gov. Pritzker is also requesting additional time from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to gather, validate and document the information needed to support a federal disaster declaration. This process will include a joint preliminary damage assessment of the affected areas. This locally-led assessment is attended by representatives of FEMA, Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the U.S. Small Business Administration. The information gathered in this joint assessment is a key piece of documentation in the federal disaster declaration process.