



Oregon Department of Administrative Services

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Governor's Recovery Cabinet closes book on December storms
'Exit Conference' features wrap-ups by state, local agencies on results, costs

Salem: Governor Ted Kulongoski's Recovery Cabinet—a panel of agency heads, advisers and local government leaders charged with coordinating northwest Oregon's recovery from last December's devastating storms—formally ended its activities Tuesday with reports on results, costs and lessons learned.

“Oregonians can be proud of the way their government agencies worked together with private businesses, relief organizations and the federal government to speed recovery from the storms of December '07,” the Governor said in a statement. “The key ingredients in the success of the Governor's Recovery Cabinet are planning and preparation. Oregon's state and local agencies started working together long before the storms hit to prepare for just such an emergency. They were ready not only to protect lives and property while the emergency was under way, but also to coordinate their efforts to help families and communities recover from it as quickly as possible.”

Costs

The deputy director of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Kris Kautz, reported to the Recovery Cabinet that DAS and the Oregon Military Department have jointly sought approval from the legislature's Emergency Board for \$21.2 million, which represents a 25-percent match needed to receive federal reimbursement for repairs and cleanup in the aftermath of the storms. About \$1.9 million of the request is from the state general fund.

DAS and the Military Department also asked for the Board's approval of \$16.5 million of “other funds,” and another \$2.8 million of federal funds, in order to cover expenses associated with helping communities recover. Kautz noted that the request does not

include some expenses that state agencies will simply absorb. The Emergency Board meets Thursday.

State and local response to the storms

State agencies responded quickly and massively to requests for help from communities while the storms still raged, taking advantage of pre-planning and coordination that had occurred before the emergency. After initial coordination of the state's response, Oregon Emergency Management (OEM), as part of the Governor's Recovery Cabinet, worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to obtain financial help to repair damages to government facilities.

The two agencies, FEMA and OEM, conducted a preliminary damage assessment for infrastructure following the storms. Estimated damages totaled \$54.9 million. Currently, 160 applicants need financing for 938 recovery projects. Qualified applicants will receive 75 percent of the cost from FEMA, with the applicants themselves funding the remainder.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) dealt with damage or blockages on two dozen state highways, at a cost of about \$10 million. The agency worked with Oregon Emergency Management, the Public Utility Commission and the Oregon State Police to bring utility crews to areas where downed power lines, fallen trees and other debris had closed roads.

The Oregon National Guard received an escort from ODOT into the stricken areas where the Guard performed rescues and worked to protect human life and property. A few days after the storm started, a massive mudslide closed Highway 30 near Clatskanie, requiring a concentrated effort by ODOT. Working with other state agencies and local governments, ODOT and the National Guard transported medical supplies and vaccine, bottled water, satellite phones, generators, lighting equipment, tents and tarps to the affected communities.

Total storm-related costs for ODOT came to about \$14.5 million. ODOT officials say the agency's response was far better than its response during the flood disaster in 1996, and credited the improvement partly to during TOPOFF-4 (last year's joint federal-state-local emergency exercise).

Over the two-day period of Dec. 3-4, the 125th Tactical Squadron of the Oregon National Guard rescued more 300 stranded residents of Vernonia. Guard facilities at Camp Rilea housed a Red Cross shelter that served more than 3,000 hot meals and provided housing and other care to displaced families.

In addition, the Guard provided 11,500 gallons of fuel to emergency-service vehicles, helped Pacific Power workers with transportation and housing, and provided numerous generators to provide power to critical facilities in Vernonia and other communities.

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) provided inmate work crews to provide direct help to the communities of Vernonia, Mist and Astoria in the wake of the storms. Nineteen Corrections staff and 254 inmates from four institutions removed six million pounds of garbage and debris during the two weeks following the storms. They erected a

tent city and a mobile kitchen, and served more than 6,300 meals to the families of Vernonia.

In 2,000 inmate days, the DOC team worked in 446 homes in Vernonia. They removed wet hay from farms in Fishhawk Lake and the surrounding area. They removed debris and waterlogged drywall from the local high school, working 10- to 12-hour days in cold weather, while logging only three minor injuries.

DOC work crews also deployed sandbags and helped clean up flood debris in Astoria.

Other state agencies obtained or provided critical items and services to the stricken communities. In addition to more than 200,000 servings of food, the state supplied plastic tarps and rolls, bottled water, water in tankers, water filtration systems, portable toilets and fencing, removal of “gray” water, propane, first-aid kits, heavy equipment and trucking services, boots and shovels.

A more detailed description of state agencies’ efforts appears on the Web at:

http://governor.oregon.gov/gov/docs/gov_recoverycab_exitconf_slides.pdf