

STATE OF IOWA
KIM REYNOLDS
GOVERNOR

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER**

April 15, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Acting Regional Administrator Catherine Sanders
FEMA Region VII
11224 Holmes Road
Kansas City, MO 64131

RE: Request for Major Disaster Declaration

Dear Mr. President:

Severe weather in Iowa on March 19, 2025, produced high winds and blizzard conditions across much of west central and northwest Iowa. The severe weather conditions caused significant damage to public infrastructure and private property. Consequently, I respectfully request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Iowa for the events which occurred on March 19, 2025, under the provisions of Section (401) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR §§ 206.36-206.48.

Given the significant impact to the residents of the state, I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State of Iowa, and the affected local governments, and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary.

For this reason, I am requesting Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding statewide and activation of the Public Assistance programs for the counties listed below:

Public Assistance: Crawford, Harrison, Monona, and Woodbury.

Hazard Mitigation: Statewide

In addition to Federal Public Assistance programs, I am requesting that the State of Iowa be designated as a Public Assistance managing state. I am confident in the leadership and subject matter expertise evident at the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), and have full faith in the staff's ability to administer the federal Public Assistance program without the full suite of support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The State of Iowa has committed to establishing itself as an emergency management and disaster recovery leader not only regionally, but also nationally. Iowa HSEM maintains the capacity, capability, and institutional knowledge necessary to administer the Public Assistance program at the State-level which in turn will reduce the burden, reliance, and increased financial and personnel commitments on our federal partners.

This request for a major disaster declaration under the Stafford Act does not include a request for federal Individual Assistance.

I. Confirmation that the Governor has taken appropriate action under State law and directed the execution of the State emergency plan—44 CFR 206.36(c)(1)

On March 19, 2025, I took action and issued a proclamation of disaster emergency pursuant to Iowa Code § 29C.6 for the following 4 counties:

Crawford, Harrison, Monona, and Woodbury.

This Proclamation activated the disaster response and recovery aspects of the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's Iowa Emergency Response Plan, and those additional response plans applicable to the counties affected by this disaster. It also authorized the use and deployment of all available State resources, supplies, equipment, and materials as are reasonably necessary to assist citizens located in the disaster-affected counties.

On March 27, I issued a second proclamation activating the State of Iowa's Individual Assistance and Disaster Case Advocacy programs for Harrison County. These programs are available to assist individuals and families adversely affected by the disaster, who could not be helped by other means of financial assistance, and for whom federal assistance under the Stafford Act was not made available.

This Proclamation activated the disaster response and recovery aspects of the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's Iowa Emergency Response Plan, and those additional response plans applicable to the counties affected by this disaster. It also authorized the use and deployment of all available State resources, supplies, equipment, and materials as are reasonably necessary to assist citizens located in the disaster-affected counties.

GENERAL FACTS OF THIS DISASTER

According to the National Weather Service (see event summary attached to this request), an intense low-pressure system brought strong winds and blizzard conditions to northwest Iowa on March 19. Early morning thunderstorms produced up to quarter sized hail across central Iowa with small hail covering the ground in some locations. Northwest Iowa quickly transitioned over to snow, including thundersnow, with visibility and road conditions quickly deteriorating. Winds across the area, even outside the snow areas, gusted 45-55+ mph, including a 62-mph gust in Carroll, IA. A band of 6-12+ inches fell across northwest Iowa with the heaviest amounts of 12-14 inches reported in Kossuth County. Dangerous travel conditions were widespread and Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) designated several roadways as "Travel Not Advised" with zero visibility, drifting snow, and high winds, making travel conditions especially hazardous.

The counties affected have an average population of just over 30,000 residents county-wide. The ruralness, lack of immediate major resources, and in cases, moderate travel distances to necessary essential services, such as food and fuel, exacerbated the impact of these conditions to these residents, businesses, and public entities.

On April 8, 2025, the State of Iowa requested the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conduct a Public Assistance joint preliminary damage assessment in 5 counties. At the conclusion of the joint preliminary damage assessment for Public Assistance, it was determined that, combined, four counties had twenty entities reporting damages, which included significant utility and wind damage.

Because of these joint preliminary damage assessments, I have determined that the severity of damage in the four counties is such that the federal Public Assistance Program is needed to aid in recovery.

Attached are summary documents for damage costs to date. As we are able to assess damage to other affected counties, including infrastructure damage, I reserve the right to request additional types of federal assistance for additional counties.

II. The situation is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments— 44 CFR 206.36(b)(1)

Pursuant to 44 CFR 206.36, I have determined this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and supplementary federal assistance is necessary to save lives and to protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster.

Fatalities, Injuries, and Evacuations

Between 12:00am – 8:00pm Iowa State Patrol responded to 74 crashes, assisting 268 motorists. Due to declining travel conditions a number of these calls for service resulted in stranded motorists being evacuated from roadways and interstates.

In Crawford County, emergency medical services were delayed in getting to the scene of a vehicle crash due to poor visibility and deteriorating road conditions. The impact on the injured individual is still undetermined due to this delay.

Utilities

The Iowa Utilities Board reported that, on March 19, 31,452 customers were without power. The majority of these residents live in small, rural communities that are serviced by Rural Electric Cooperatives (RECs). Some examples of impacts are:

- The entirety of Monona County population, 8,751 individuals were without power on March 19.
 - The City of Onawa (Monona County) was without power for four days, until the evening of March 23.
 - The City of Whiting (Monona County) was without power for one day, until the afternoon of March 20.
 - The City of Blencoe (Monona County) was without power for two days, until the evening of March 21.
- In Harrison County, 10 cities were without power for varying durations, the longest being for over 110 hours – or 5 days.
 - Over 300 rural homes in Harrison County were without power for 5 days, the isolation, ruralness, and magnitude of the utility disruption had significant impacts on these residents.
- In Woodbury County, 15 cities were without power for varying durations, with the longest being for over 48 hours, and affected 5,500 rural customers.
- In Crawford County, 6 cities were without power for several hours, with the peak time being nearly a day in the rural city of Schleswig.

Rural Electric Cooperatives reported widespread damage, which included more than 300 damaged power poles, four damaged distribution substations, and numerous miles of power lines downed. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives coordinated mutual aid for several co-ops, including:

- Consumers Energy Cooperative sent a crew of workers to Denison, IA.
- Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative provided multiple mutual aid assets to Woodbury Rural Electric Cooperative including a basket truck, digger derrick and trailer, and a pickup truck with a skid steer.
- Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative sent crews and trucks to Western Iowa Power Cooperative to help with restoration efforts.

Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Several communities experienced significant impacts to critical facilities and infrastructure:

- Monona County:
 - Burgess hospital in the City of Onawa, a critical care hospital that provides health services to rural residents and is one of the only healthcare facilities in the area, was put on generator power due to the electrical power disruption.
 - Further, an EMS diversion was put into place due to the hospital being unable to provide imaging or elective procedure services, causing the hospital's ability to care for patients to be severely impacted throughout the power disruption.
 - The Monona County 911 center and the county jail ran on generator power throughout the event – should the generators have failed, or ran out of fuel and be unable to be refueled due to weather conditions or power disruption, the county would have had severe issues with emergency medical and jail services.
 - The city of Whiting, IA in Monona County was placed on a boil advisory due to issues with its water tower pumps and motors, caused by the severe winds and electrical disruption. The boil advisory was in place for four days, putting a burden on residents as they did not have access to clean tap water.

Commercial and Transportation

Multiple roadways were closed by either official notification from Iowa DOT or due to the deteriorating road conditions. Transportation of commercial goods and services, response by emergency medical services, response by recovery and restoration services personnel, and travel by private citizens was severely impacted.

- The Iowa DOT closed Interstate 29, a major north-south running roadway that connects multiple counties in the State to larger cities along the Missouri River border, for nearly eight hours. This closure caused severe disruptions to the movements of goods and services, emergency medical services, and the ability for residents to seek shelter or evacuate if necessary.
 - In Monona County, conditions were so severe that Iowa DOT pulled snow plows from Interstate 29 and had to redirect traffic through the city of Onawa.
 - In Crawford County, state highways 141 and 39 were closed due to drifting snow. In these rural areas of the State, highway closures are especially impactful as there are generally no other roads or detours available to residents, emergency responders, or restoration services.
- The largest, and most significant, transportation impact caused by these severe storms was the closure of dozens of gas stations across the counties affected. This caused fuel shortages and refueling challenges for residents, emergency services,

and utility repair crews. Further, a number of critical infrastructure facilities (hospitals, water treatment plants, etc.) were running off of generator power. Had the duration of disruption to refueling services been greater, these facilities would have been at risk of having to close – greatly impacting the residents of the counties affected and potentially causing life threatening conditions.

Economic

All of the affected counties reported that local businesses experienced significant economic impacts due to this event. This was due to both the electrical disruption causing loss of power, and to the inability of customers and consumers to patronize, and travel to, these local businesses. Businesses in small and rural communities already operate on thin profit margins, and smaller revenues, than those in larger and more populated localities. The disruption not only affected their ability to sell goods and services, but businesses with refrigerated or temperature-sensitive products also had to dispose of those items after losing power for several hours or even days.

Residential

The severe nature of the incident resulted in significant electrical disruptions to residential areas, particularly affecting rural residents. At the peak of the outage, over 30,000 customers were without power. As stated previously, Monona County was without power for several days, a situation mirrored in many cities across the affected counties. Further, with the electrical disruption and damage done to electrical infrastructure, numerous counties reported that residents were experiencing power surges, causing damage to critical medical equipment, appliances, and increasing the potential for fire due to electrical malfunctions.

Also, due to the duration of the electrical disruption of over five days in some of the affected counties, residents reported food and other refrigerated items spoiling. In rural communities that generally stock up food due to being isolated and under resourced, this was a major impact. Not only was the ability for residents to feed their families impacted, but they also experienced a financial impact as those foodstuffs had to be thrown out and replaced.

Lastly, should federal support for the recovery of costs and damages incurred not be granted, it is highly likely that the cost of restoration of services and repair of damaged infrastructure, currently totaling over eight million dollars across the affected counties, will be passed on to Rural Electric Cooperative customers. These rural residents maintain a very thin bottom line and these added financial burdens will cause further hardship to these families.

Agriculture

The counties affected are in rural areas of the State of Iowa, and although there were no specific agricultural damages reported, the effects on the farmers and producers that reside in these counties cannot be overlooked. These residents help in feeding the citizens

of the United States, and the impacts from this event that affect their homes and community businesses, could contribute to disruptions in agricultural operations and services provided that may be felt nation-wide.

Education

Schools in Crawford County closed on March 18 in anticipation of this storm, and reopened on March 20.

III. Federal assistance under the Act is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the State, local governments, disaster relief organizations, and compensation by insurance for disaster-related losses—44 CFR 206.36(b)(2)

The following describes the nature and amount of State and local resources that have been, or will be, used to alleviate conditions of this disaster as outlined in Section 9 of the Request for Presidential Disaster (FEMA Form 010-0-13).

Local Resources

Local emergency management agencies coordinated with local and State partners for emergency operations center support, communications assets, and coordinated damage assessments.

Immediately following the event, and in response to widespread power outages and declining temperatures, the State of Iowa and local communities activated the following resources for residents, including:

- City of Blencoe, population 233, (Monona County) opened an emergency shelter for overnight stays and to provide charging stations for life sustaining medical equipment.
- City of Onawa, population 2,816, (Monona County) opened an emergency shelter to feed residents and to provide charging stations for life sustaining medical equipment.
- Warming centers were opened in the cities of Charter Oak, Manilla, Westside, Vail, Kiron and Schleswig in Crawford County. The main concern being that the lack of power would cause temperatures in homes to plummet, causing potentially life-threatening conditions for those residents.

Further, mutual aid was requested from neighboring Rural Electric Cooperatives and was mobilized quickly, showing the ability of rural organizations working in concert with local emergency management agencies to provide rapid support and restoration services in severe situations such as this one.

Non-Governmental Organization Resources

The Salvation Army was requested and mobilized to the City of Onawa in Monona County and provided lunch and supper to impacted residents over three days. Over 500 meals were provided in one day alone.

State Resources

Governor of Iowa

As governor, I issued timely proclamations of disaster emergency to support statewide response operations and activated the Iowa Individual Assistance Grant Program and the Disaster Case Advocacy Program in Harrison County. I also activated the State Emergency Operations Center, and provided public messaging to support State and local operations.

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management coordinated resources from the State Emergency Operations Center and conducted joint Public Assistance damage assessments with local and federal entities.

The Iowa Department of Public Safety (Iowa State Patrol) reported over 70 vehicle crashes and assisted 268 motorists due to the severe, and hazardous, roadway conditions caused by this event. Officials also responded to emergency notifications related to storm damage and power outages.

The Iowa Department of Transportation facilitated road closures and informed the public about detours around the closures.

Public Assistance

On April 8, 2025, I directed the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to work with federal partners to gather and validate data related to damage costs and impacts to public infrastructure. Below is a summary of estimated damage eligible under the Public Assistance Program in the four counties for which I am requesting federal assistance:

Category	Estimates
A (Debris Removal)	\$6,000
B (Emergency Protective Measures)	\$351,975
C (Roads & Bridges)	
D (Water Control Facilities)	
E (Buildings)	
F (Utilities)	\$8,005,632
G (Parks, Rec Facilities, Other)	
Total	\$8,363,607

Following the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment executed by FEMA and Iowa HSEM, it was determined that the four counties listed had exceeded their county

thresholds for assistance, and the State of Iowa had exceeded its State threshold by over \$2.3 million.

Role of Hazard Mitigation Efforts

The State of Iowa has emphasized the importance of hazard mitigation planning activities for many years. The State's planning process is driven by Section 322 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. Efforts are synchronized through the coordination and integration of local hazard mitigation planning and the interagency State Hazard Mitigation Team. The State has an approved Enhanced State Mitigation Plan, effective September 2023.

Since 1990, FEMA, the State of Iowa, and local entities have been proactive in mitigating the effects of natural disasters to private and public property, committing \$675 million to reduce hazards in counties included with this request. Since 2008, the State of Iowa has invested over \$136 million to retrofit and mitigate 2,750 miles of rural electric infrastructure across the state which would have been severely impacted during this event. Even with these efforts in place throughout the state, the magnitude and severity of this incident and the impact to rural communities are beyond the State of Iowa's capacity to mitigate.

Recent Disaster History of the State, Including the Past Twelve Months

All of the counties included in this request have been included as a declared area in a previous declaration, an active FEMA Disaster Declaration (not including COVID-19), and/or a USDA Disaster Declaration for Drought. Currently (2019 - Present), the State of Iowa has eight open presidentially-declared disasters for Individual and Public Assistance, including DR-4779 which was declared on May 14, 2024, DR-4784 which was declared on May 24, 2024, and DR-4796 which was declared on June 24, 2024. All of the counties included in this major disaster request are currently included in one of the three most recent open Presidential Disaster Declarations aforementioned and occurring in the last year, with more than 1,200 projects and a total obligation expected to exceed \$370 million in these three disasters alone. The latest round of damage only serves to cause additional hardship to these counties.

Preliminary estimates of the types and amounts of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are tabulated in the enclosures. The Governor's Certification is included with this request. I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable nonfederal share of costs required by the Stafford Act. The total nonfederal expenditures for the period starting March 19, 2025, are expected to exceed \$2 million. Further, I request Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding statewide.

In accordance with 44 CFR § 206.208, the State of Iowa agrees that, with respect to direct federal assistance, it will do the following:

1. Provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary to accomplish the approved work;

2. Hold and save the United States free from damages due to the requested work, and shall indemnify the federal government against any claims arising from such work;
3. Provide reimbursement to FEMA for the nonfederal share of the cost of such work in accordance with provisions of the FEMA-State agreement; and
4. Assist the performing federal agency in all support and local jurisdictional matters.

Pursuant to Sections 403 and 407 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5170b, 5173, the State agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America for any claims arising from the removal of debris or wreckage for this disaster. The State agrees that debris removal from public and private property will not occur until the landowner signs an unconditional authorization for the removal of debris.

I hereby designate Dennis T. Harper as the state coordinating officer for this request. He will work with FEMA and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Reynolds", written in a cursive style.

Kimberly K. Reynolds
Governor, State of Iowa

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

Enclosure B1 – Public Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment Cost Estimate Worksheet

Enclosure B2 – Governor’s Certification

Supporting Documentation – NWS Event Summary March 19th 2025

ENCLOSURE B1 TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance

County (5)	Category A	Category B	Category C	Category D	Category E	Category F	Category G	Total Cost
Crawford						\$153,021		\$153,021
Harrison		\$304,490				\$3,508,172		\$3,812,662
Monona	\$6,000	\$47,485				\$2,898,601		\$2,952,086
Shelby						\$15,000		\$15,000
Woodbury						\$1,430,838		\$1,430,838
Total	\$6,000	\$351,975				\$8,005,632		\$8,363,607

The \$8,363,607 total includes all public assistance damage impacts reported regardless of whether the county met the county per capita indicator.

ENCLOSURE B2 TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance

I certify that for this current disaster, state and local government expenditures and obligations will include the non-federal share and costs required by the Stafford Act. As stated in my basic letter, and based on information available at this time, tabulation of these estimated expenditures and obligations are as follows:

Category	Estimates
A (Debris Removal)	\$6,000
B (Emergency Protective Measures)	\$351,975
C (Roads & Bridges)	
D (Water Control Facilities)	
E (Buildings)	
F (Utilities)	\$8,005,632
G (Parks, Rec Facilities, Other)	
Total	\$8.363,607

Northwest Iowa Blizzard

March 19, 2025

Picture credit: Brian Burt

Event Summary

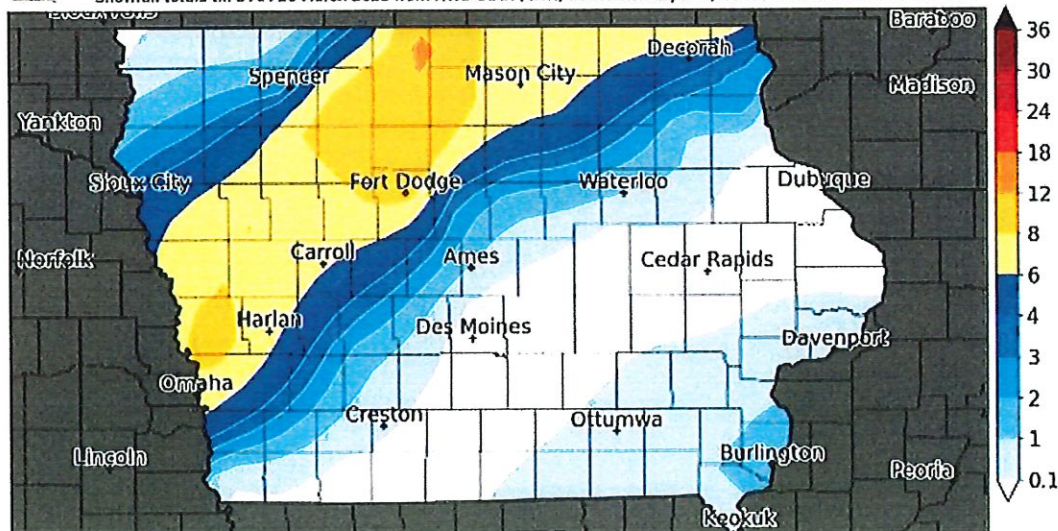
An intense low pressure system brought strong wind and blizzard conditions to northwest Iowa on March 19th. Early morning thunderstorms produced a to quarter sized hail across central Iowa with small hail covering the ground in some locations. Northwest Iowa quickly transitioned over to snow, including hundreds of snow, with visibility and road conditions quickly deteriorating. Winds across the area, even outside the snow area gusted 45-55+ mph, including a 62 mph gust in Carroll. A band of 6-12"+ fell across northwest Iowa with heaviest amounts of 12-14" reported in Kossuth County.

Snow Reports



19-20 March 2025 - IEM Snowfall Total Analysis

Snowfall totals thru 8 AM 20 March 2025 from NWS COOP, LSR, CoCoRaHS Reports; IEM 2024-2025 Winter Storm #18



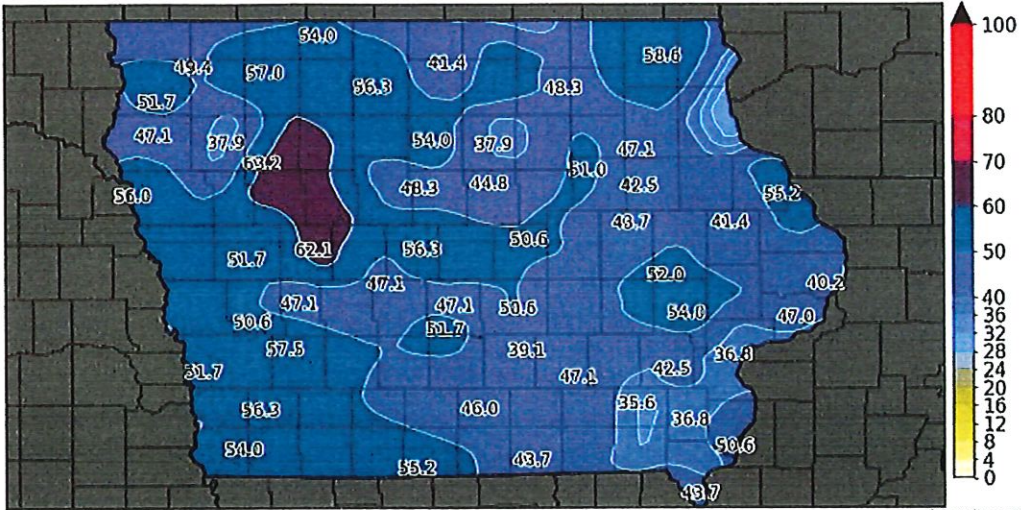
Iowa Environmental Mesonet :: generated 20 March 2025 07:10 AM

[Click image to view interactive storm report map.](#)

Strong Winds

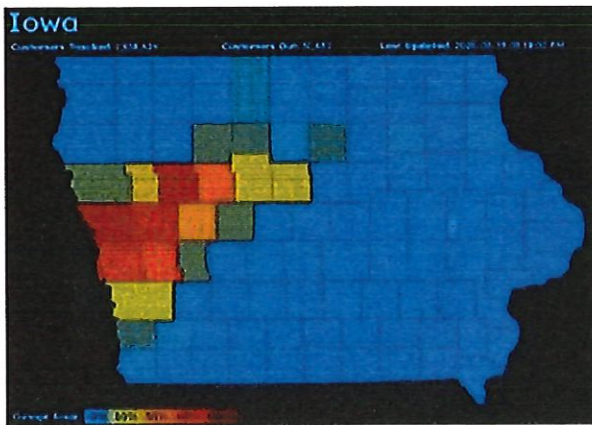


Peak Wind Gust [MPH] for Iowa on 2025-03-19



Generated at 19 Mar 2025 9 23 PM CDT on 1.64s

data units :: mph
IEM Analysis App #206



Above: Power outages due to strong wind and heavy snow.



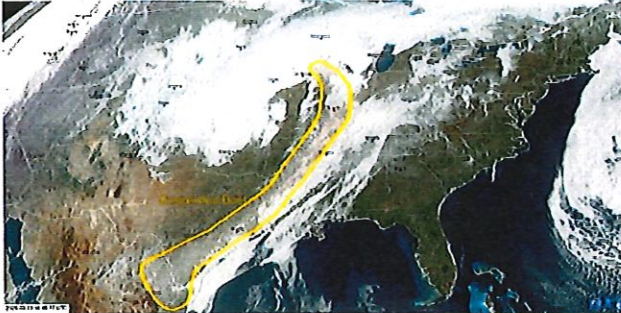
At right: Initial snowfall and sky have a distinct brown appearance due to dust and dirt that had been blown all the way from Texas and into the Midwest. This feature was clearly visible on satellite imagery.

Brown sky and snow viewed in Thornton, IA. Photo credit: X user @Farmboy8655



All information is PRELIMINARY. Page last updated: March 20, 2025

Satellite Imagery



At Left: GOES "Geo Color" imagery showing a swath of dust (yellow outlined area) from Texas into the Midwest on 3/19/25.

At Right GOES "True Color" imagery showing the swath of snow across the Midwest from KS/NE/IA/WI on 3/20/25.



Impacts

Dangerous travel conditions were widespread affecting a corridor from Kansas to Nebraska, Iowa, and into Wisconsin. DOTs across the Midwest, including Iowa, designated several roadways as "Travel Not Advised" with zero visibility and drifting snow making for impassable conditions.



Iowa State Patrol calls for service -3/19/2025.



All information is PRELIMINARY. Page last updated: March 20, 2025