



NEWS RELEASE

## Department of Public Safety

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### **Gov. Daugaard Seeks Individual Assistance for Tornado Damage**

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has requested a Presidential Disaster Declaration to help South Dakotans whose homes and businesses were damaged by a tornado and severe storm event May 10 in Douglas and Charles Mix counties. That includes the city of Delmont, which was heavily damaged by a tornado.

The request is for the Individual Assistance program from FEMA. If the President approves the declaration request, FEMA can offer a range of programs designed to help state residents who have been impacted by the severe weather.

In a letter to FEMA, Gov. Daugaard noted that an EF-2 tornado touched down in southeast South Dakota on Sunday, May 10. The tornado was 400 yards wide, traveled more than 16 miles and had peak winds of 130 mph. The Governor stated that Delmont was the hardest area hit, with nine people being injured.

“For two days, the entire city was without power and water,” the Governor wrote. “The local fire department was destroyed and hazardous debris was scattered throughout the town.”

Gov. Daugaard stated that among the damaged structures in Delmont were 57 homes of which 14 sustained major damage and 27 were completely destroyed. Among the other buildings destroyed was the Zion Lutheran Church, which was more than 100 years old. At one point, 89 percent of the town’s population voluntarily evacuated due to hazardous power lines on the ground, leaking propane tanks and fallen trees.

Local and state governmental agencies, along with private businesses and relief organizations, have provided assistance. But Gov. Daugaard noted in his letter that the citizens of Delmont need federal help to meet long-term recovery needs.

“As you understand, recovery from a disaster takes years and even longer if no federal assistance is available,” he wrote. “Residents of this small South Dakota town need your assistance to help them recover and return them to the new normal lifestyle.”

Gov. Daugaard stated in his letter that in the last two years, the state has experienced five Presidential Disaster Declarations with eligible public infrastructure damage totaling

\$81.6 million. The declarations covered a 45-county area for natural disasters that damaged roads and buildings, created dangerous travel, killed livestock and leveled individual homes.

“As 2015 approached, we hoped for a quieter year,” he wrote. “Unfortunately, South Dakota is faced with another difficult year due to tornado destruction.”

Federal, state and local teams assessed the extent and severity of damage to homes and businesses in the two counties May 19. Based on those assessments, Gov. Dugaard determined that a request for Individual Assistance programs is justified.

The Governor’s request does not guarantee federal funding will be made available to South Dakota citizens. South Dakota last received an Individual Assistance declaration in 2011 for widespread damage from Missouri River flooding.