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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: March 5, 2018**

**Contact: Matt Holt, Freeholder Director Hunterdon County**

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**Edward J. Smith, Freeholder Director Warren County**

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## **Hunterdon and Warren Freeholder Directors Ask Governor For Assessment To Seek Federal Storm Relief**

The Freeholder Directors in Hunterdon and Warren County today have written to Governor Phil Murphy requesting that he implement a statewide damage assessment to determine the state's, and Hunterdon and Warren Counties, qualification to be declared eligible for federal disaster relief.

Hunterdon County Freeholder Director Matt Holt and Warren County Freeholder Director Ed Smith also requested that the Governor have the state prepare to declare a state of emergency in anticipation of another significant storm projected for March 7 and 8.

The Freeholders Directors said such a declaration by the state would “make various state resources available to county and local governments responding to the new storm, while still recovering from the weekend storm.” A copy of the letter is attached.

The federal Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, (the Stafford Act) states in part that: ‘All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected State.’

In order to qualify, the State must demonstrate to the federal government that governmental units throughout the state have expended nearly \$13 million in resources in response to a disaster.

“The emergency response personnel in both counties have worked round the clock all weekend. The first step in the federal disaster process is an assessment of costs by each governing entity. We are asking Governor Murphy to have the State Office of Emergency Management begin that process,” Holt said.

Smith added, “Warren County has suffered extensive road closings and losses in power. There may well be a compounding effect from the forthcoming projected storm. We believe New Jersey needs to get out ahead of the curve in determining if the State qualifies for disaster relief.”

Both Directors had praise for their respective emergency response teams, 9-1-1 centers, and Public Works Departments in responding to the storm.

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March 5, 2018

Honorable Phil Murphy  
Governor  
State of New Jersey  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

As Directors of our respective Freeholder Boards, and on the behalf of the many thousands of residents in our two Counties impacted by Winter Storm Riley, we respectfully request that you direct the State Office of Emergency Management to implement a statewide damage assessment, for the purposes of determining the state's, Hunterdon and Warren Counties, qualification to be declared eligible for federal disaster relief.

We further request in anticipation of another significant storm projected for March 7 and 8, that the state make preparations to potentially declare a state of emergency in New Jersey, thereby making various state resources available to county and local governments responding to the new storm, while still recovering from the weekend storm.

As you are aware Hunterdon and Warren Counties, along with many other areas of the state, have suffered extensive damage resulting from the storm over the past weekend. Downed trees and power lines, closed roadways, and power outages extending until possibly mid-week are causing a high level of expenditure for emergency response, public safety, and public works services in our two Counties, as well as numerous municipalities within the Counties.

Many schools remain closed due to closed roadways or power outages. Over 40 roadways in the Warren County and 130 in Hunterdon County were closed at some point over the weekend, with many still being to be addressed because of downed power lines.

Our respective emergency response personnel performed with great dedication, round the clock, throughout the weekend, continuing through today. Our staffs are presently gathering the information necessary for submission to FEMA. Should there be the opportunity for public assistance under FEMA requirements, the relief would be welcomed.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,



J. Matthew Holt  
Director



Edward J. Smith  
Director