

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 9, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

First, we would like to thank you for visiting New Jersey to view the damage caused by Hurricane Irene and for providing federal assistance to New Jersey to respond to the storm. Unfortunately, New Jersey is suffering additional severe flooding, and we are now asking that you make an expedited Major Disaster declaration for the entire state of New Jersey in response to Tropical Storm Lee, which began impacting the state on September 4th.

A stalled front combined with tropical moisture associated with Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Katia has dropped heavy rainfall on the entire mid-Atlantic region. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), more than a foot of rain has fallen in some regions since Sunday morning. Flooding is being reported throughout the state as heavy rain pushed rivers and streams throughout New Jersey well above their banks.

On Wednesday, the Passaic River Basin and the Raritan and Delaware rivers began overflowing their banks in many parts of the state. Authorities in Trenton went door-to-door telling residents to evacuate as the Delaware River nearby was cresting fast and was expected to inundate neighborhoods there.

The effects of this storm are further exacerbated by the after-effects of Hurricane Irene, which dumped more than a foot of rain on parts of New Jersey, causing the ground to be saturated, and rivers to overflow and remain at dangerously high levels. To put it simply, there is just no place for this additional rainfall to go. The National Weather Service estimates that Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee have caused the most significant flooding New Jersey has experienced in 40 years.

Homes, businesses and personal property that were damaged by Hurricane Irene will suffer even more, and many of those who averted disaster before will not be so lucky this time. The destruction will lead to severe hardship and the costs will be so great that many residents will not be able to rebuild their lives on their own. In addition, the recent rainfall has caused even more extensive damage to public infrastructure such as roads, bridges, public parks and government facilities, and local governments will face enormous challenges as they try to rebuild.

Given the severe nature of these rainstorms on top of the devastating hurricane that struck New Jersey less than two weeks ago, we ask that you immediately declare a Major Disaster in response to Tropical Storm Lee. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and we look forward to your prompt action in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,


FRANK R LAUTENBERG
United States Senator


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator