**Ice Storm January 24-26, 2026**

**By: Don Wheeler, Meteorologist**

A major ice storm struck north Louisiana and adjacent states January 24 through the 26 with devasting effects. Significant icing downed numerous trees, branches, powerlines, and utility poles resulting in extended widespread power outages. Damage to structures also occurred either due to fallen limbs and trees as well as a direct result of the weight of the ice on roofs. This historic winter weather event was so destructive that it forever changed the existing landscape.

Cold Arctic air pushed into the region during the day of January 23 with freezing temperatures arriving during the early morning hours of January 24. The system arrived in two distinct waves in the form of upper-level disturbances that followed the arrival of the Arctic air. A large and powerful upper low was spinning off the northern Baja California peninsula which contributed to abundant moisture being advecting across northern Mexico, across Texas, and eventually into our region.

The first upper disturbance pushed across north Louisiana during the day of January 24 producing a combination of sleet and freezing rain. Much of the onset of the precipitation was sleet; however, that quickly changed over to moderate to heavy freezing rain. Limbs and power lines quickly became weighed down with significant ice accumulations soon after the changeover to freezing rain resulting in numerous power outages by midday of the 24th.

The disturbance quickly exited the state by the afternoon of January 24; however, another more potent disturbance was on its heels. This disturbance arrived during the overnight hours of January 24-25 dealing a devasting blow to much of north Louisiana, especially along the I-20 corridor. The second system brought storm total liquid equivalent amounts exceeding 3-inches in some locations.

Following the precipitation event, another surge of very cold air plummeted southward behind the departing upper-level system. Temperatures dropped into the upper teens to lower 20s on the night of the 26th and morning of the 27th making for additional hardships for those without heat due to power disruptions.

## Synopsis and Overview

During the week leading up to the ice storm, long-range models were strongly indicating the event. In many cases when these models begin to indicate such an event, caution is used because of inconsistencies with long-range forecasting. In this case, however, both the GFS and EURO models were persistent in bringing a significant winter storm to much of north Louisiana and adjacent areas. At question early on was the type of precipitation and how much; but, frozen precipitation was a certainty.

Much of the eastern U.S. was under the influence of a large-scale upper trough that had been allowing waves of cold Arctic air to push south and southeast. With time, the air across our region was becoming increasingly colder.

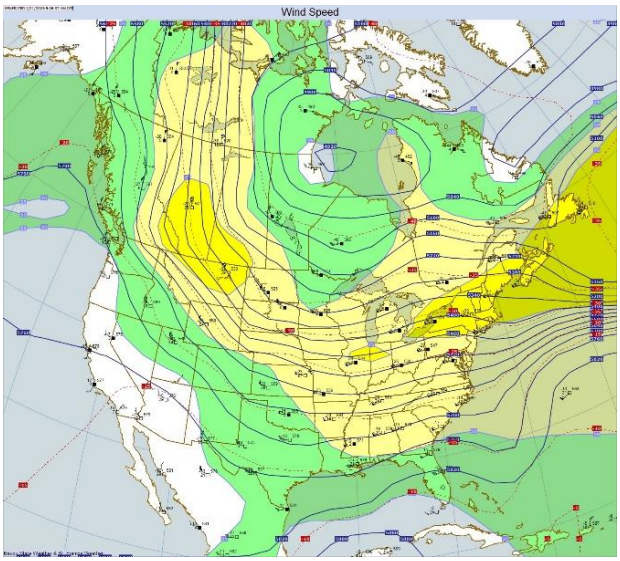



*Figure 1 – Upper-Level Chart 12Z 1/21/26*

At 1:20 PM on January 20, the National Weather Service in Shreveport issued a Winter Storm Watch for its County Warning Area which included northwest and northcentral Louisiana. By early afternoon on January 21, Winter Storm Watches had expanded east and south to include all north Louisiana as well as portions of southwest and southcentral Louisiana.

On January 22, Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry declared a state of emergency for all of Louisiana in preparation for the impending winter storm event (see attached document in the appendices).

**Sunday, January 23**

The stage was set for an impending major ice storm across north Louisiana. Forecasts called for ice accumulations (freezing rain) of ½ to 1-inch across much of north Louisiana through Sunday afternoon. In addition, another ½ to 1-inch of sleet would be possible. A Winter Storm Warning had been issued for northwest and northcentral Louisiana along the I-20 corridor with an Ice Storm Warning for northeast Louisiana along and north of the I-20 corridor.

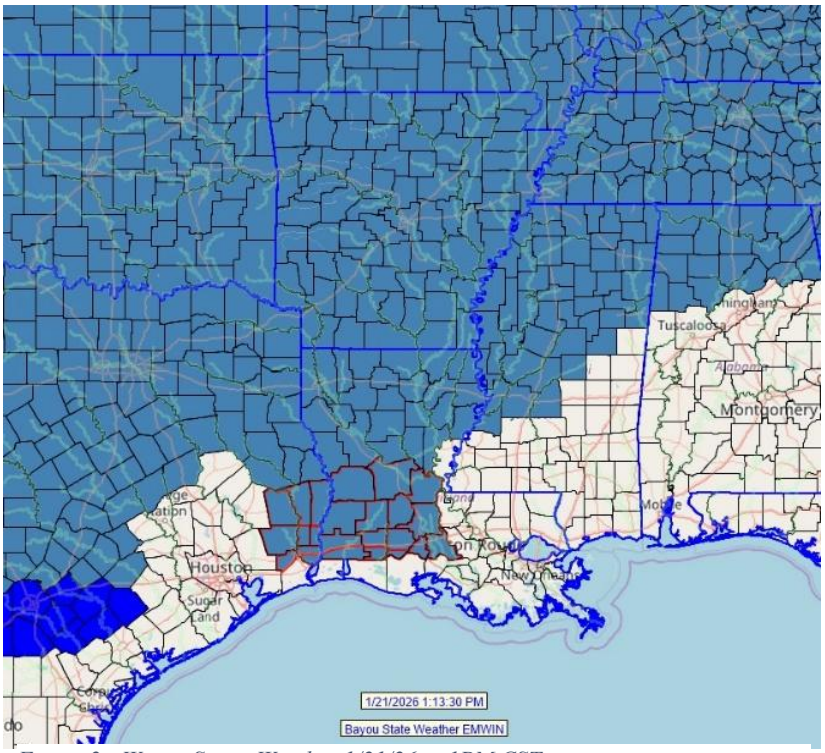



*Figure 2 - Winter Storm Watches 1/21/26 at 1PM CST*

Surface map analysis for Friday morning, January 23 depicted an Arctic cold front stretching from low pressure

over northern New York southeast across Pennsylvania, West Virginia, central Tennessee, across central Arkansas, and southern Oklahoma north of the Red River. Very cold air was behind the front being funneled in due to a massive 1051mb/31.04" high over the Montana/North Dakota border.

In the upper levels, a powerful upper low was spinning off the northern Baja California peninsula. Abundant moisture was riding around the base of a large upper trough and around the upper low advecting across northern Mexico and into Texas. This moisture pushed east out of Texas and into our region and continued through the weekend.

The front pushed south during the day of January 23 with temperatures slowly dropping overnight. Freezing temperatures did not arrive until the early morning hours of January 23 and were along and just south of the I-20 corridor. The first upper disturbance pushed into the state late Sunday night and early Saturday morning.

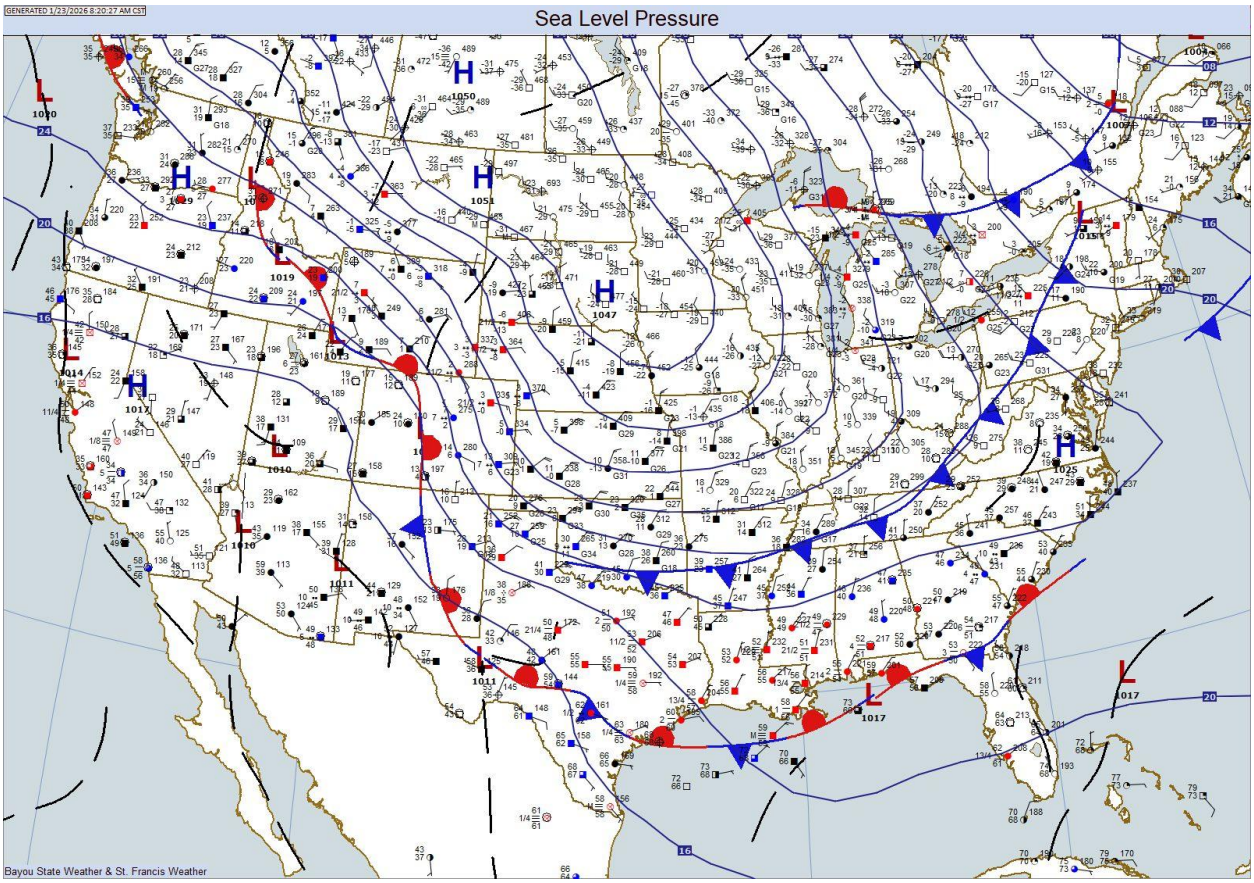



*Figure 3 - Surface Map 8AM 1/23/26 Showing Approach of the Arctic Cold Front*



Report Commissioned by: Malmay Associates

## Saturday, January 24

During the morning hours of January 23, freezing temperatures were along and just south of the I-20 corridor. Precipitation was initiating with the arrival of the first upper disturbance moving east out of Texas. Numerous reports of sleet and freezing rain were incoming with the system across east Texas and northwest Louisiana.

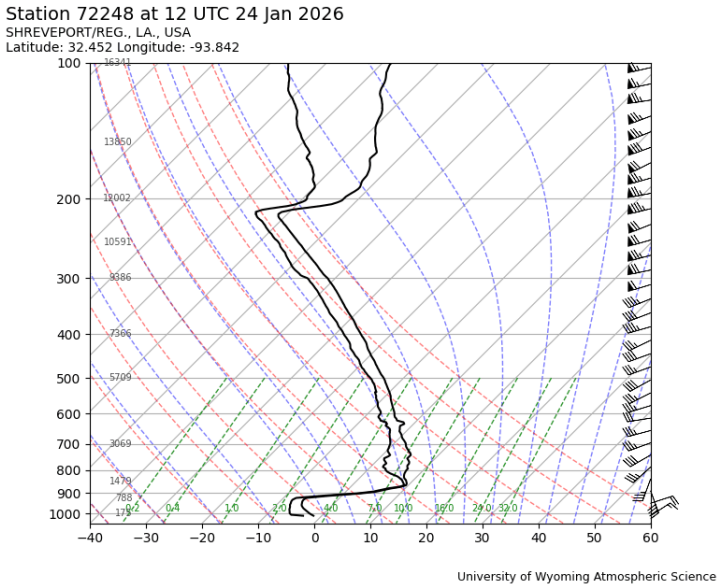



*Figure 4 - Upper-Level Sounding from KSHV showing shallow cold air at and just above the surface with saturation.*

Upper air data from the Shreveport National Weather Service at 12Z (6AM CST) on the 24th, indicated a classic set up for freezing rain and sleet. Temperatures at the surface were below freezing with a sharp inversion layer at around 925mb. This is also the level where abundant low-level moisture was present. Temperatures aloft were above the freezing mark at the 900mb level or around 2600 feet indicating the cold air was very shallow.

The precipitation quickly spread east and intensified as it pushed across north Louisiana. Of particular interest was a narrow band of heavy sleet that extended from eastern Ouachita Parish west-southwest to between Shreveport and Mansfield. This band dropped heavy amounts of sleet from ½ to over 1-inch in a just a few hours.

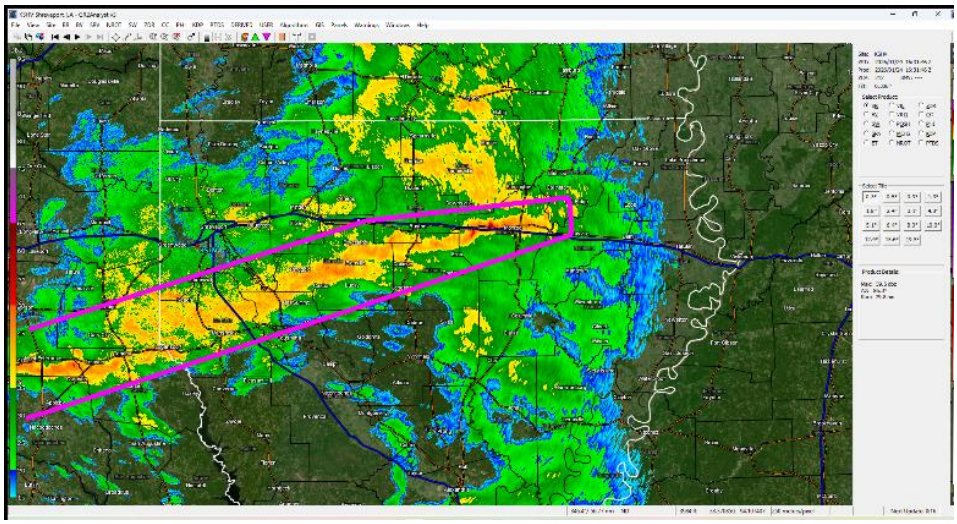


*Figure 5 - Area of Heavy Sleet and Freezing Rain at the Onset of the Event 1/24/26 at 1631Z (10:31 AM CST)*

After dumping heavy amounts of sleet, the sleet quickly transitioned over to moderate to occasionally heavy freezing rain. It was at this time significant icing began across north Louisiana. Tree and powerline damage shortly followed the onset of the freezing rain.

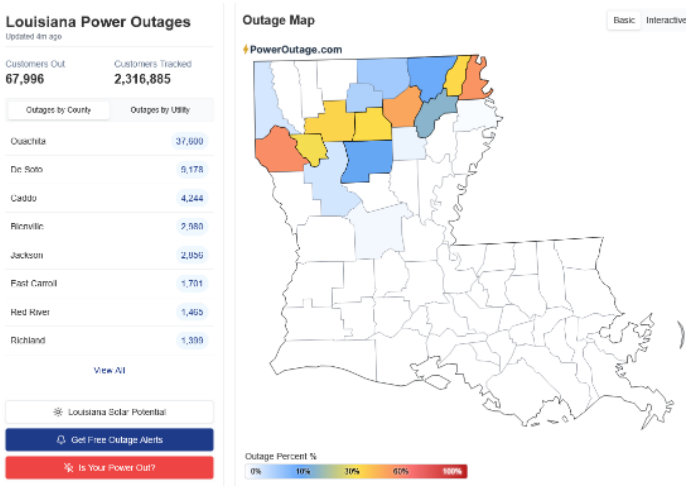



*Figure 6 - Initial Power Outage Map Following the First Round of Precipitation. Compare with the Radar Image in Figure 4.*

In the radar image above, note the location of the heavy band of precipitation in the radar image compared with the associated power outage map. This was the zone of highest ice damage during the event. According to PowerOutage.com by 9PM nearly 68,000 customers in Louisiana were without power, 37,600 of which were in Ouachita Parish alone. The most numerous power outages were across the western portion of Ouachita parish.

By afternoon, much of the precipitation had come to an end across north Louisiana; however, the more potent upper-level disturbance was quickly pushing east and northeast out of south Texas and northeastern Mexico. Precipitation began again during the evening hours Saturday with even some light snow falling in some areas.

## January 25

The primary upper disturbance pushed across our state Saturday night/Sunday morning of January 24/25. A large mass of mixed precipitation spread from southwest to northeast. The atmosphere was so unstable with this second disturbance, that many locations experienced thunder-sleet, thunder-snow, and thunder-freezing rain! By the time the second disturbance arrived, the cold air had penetrated much farther south and was

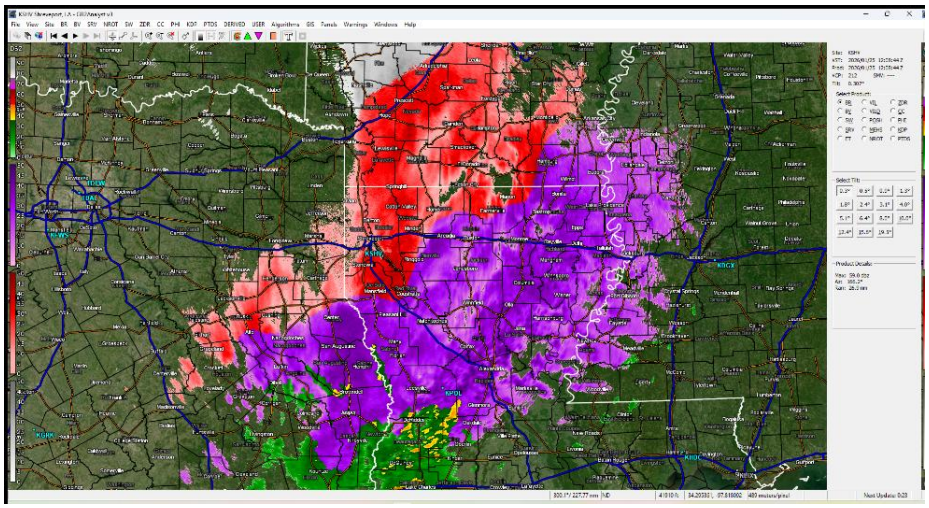


*Figure 7 – Enhanced Radar Image from KSHV at 1208Z (6:08 AM CST) 1/25/26*

affecting northern areas of south Louisiana. An observer in Avoyelles Parish reported, "Thunder, ice, sleet, and snow flurries since 3:30 AM."

*Figure 8 - Ice Accumulation on Small Twig in Ouachita Parish*

The additional heavy precipitation, most in the form of freezing rain, only exacerbated a bad situation, especially in areas struck by the earlier round of precipitation. Heavy liquid equivalent amounts fell along the I-20 corridor. CoCoRaHS station Swartz 2.0 SW in Ouachita Parish reported 3.44" of liquid precipitation (that included melted frozen precipitation) with 1.7" of ice on flat measuring surfaces. All that 3.44" amount fell when temperatures were below freezing. Precipitation fell across all north, central, and southwest Louisiana during the overnight hours. The precipitation shield began to end generally from west to east around dawn and pushing out of north Louisiana and into Mississippi around 9AM on the 25th.

Total freezing rain and ice accumulations varied across north Louisiana dependent on the type and duration of precipitation that fell. Storm data from the National Weather Service in Shreveport indicated that one to six-inches of sleet accumulated across north Louisiana with the highest concentration along and south of the I-20 corridor of northwest Louisiana. Additional ice accumulations were in the ½ to 1-inch range from near Mansfield and Coushatta northeast across the Monroe area to Oak Grove.

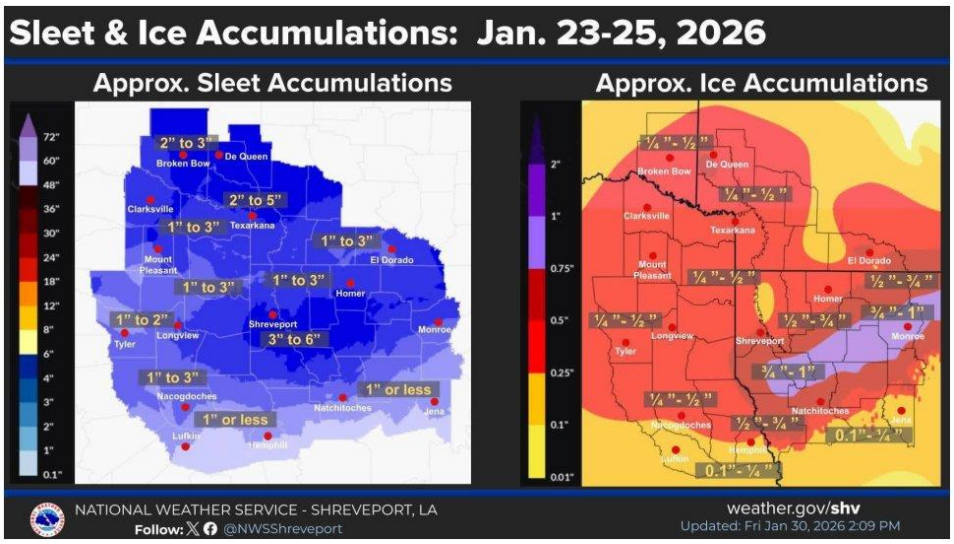



*Figure 9 - Total Sleet and Ice Accumulation across North Louisiana from the National Weather Service in Shreveport*

Satellite imagery taken early on January 27 after the clouds departed shows the extent of the ice across north Louisiana and adjacent areas.

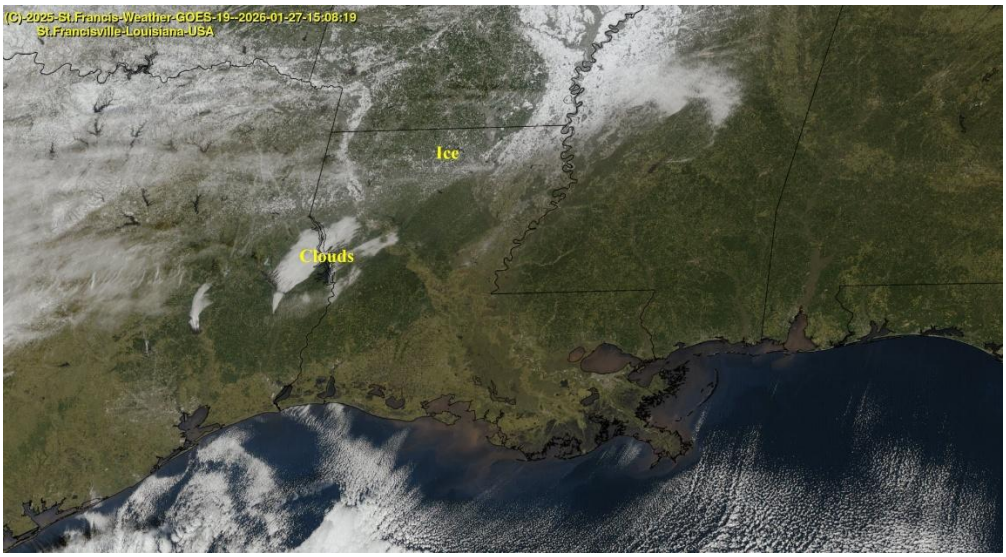



*Figure 10 - Satellite Imagery of Ice across North Louisiana and Adjacent Areas on 1/27/26 at 1508Z (9:08 AM CST). Courtesy of St. Francis Weather*

## Impacts

*Figure 11 - Ice Ladden Trees Common across All of North Louisiana*

Due to the combination of heavy sleet accumulation and heavy ice accumulation from two rounds of winter weather, widespread tree damage occurred across much of north Louisiana resulting in excessive power outages where in some cases residents were without power for over a week. Although much of the precipitation had ended by noon on the 25th, tree and powerline

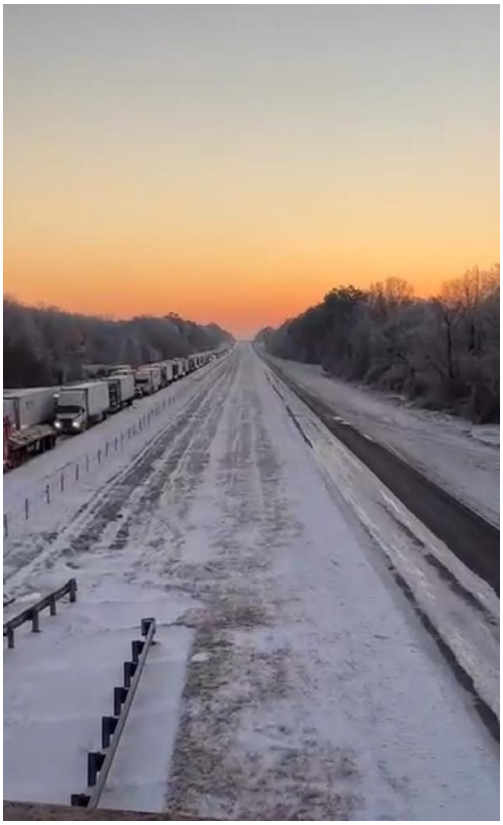


*Figure 12 - Traffic Backup on I-20 (Courtesy KSLA TV)*

damage continued to occur into the next day. In addition to tree and powerline damage, structural damage also occurred either due to trees falling on structures or simply from the weight of the ice. Metal structures, such as storage buildings, were more prone to damage due to ice accumulation.

Severe icing of I-20 was responsible for a massive traffic backup stranding hundreds of motorists for several hours up to two days. The jam stretched for nearly 40 miles between Minden to just west of the West Monroe area of Ouachita Parish. The backup was caused by disabled 18-wheelers in conjunction with the icing. Once stalled, trucks could not climb hills due to the lack of traction on the black ice. Meals and other assistance were provided along the route by the Louisiana Department of Transportation, Louisiana State Police, and the Louisiana National Guard.

Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. and John Kennedy along with Congress Members Mike Johnson, Steve Scalise, Troy Carter, Clay Higgins, Julia Letlow, PhD, and Cleo Fields. drafted a letter to President Trump on February 10 in support of Governor Landry's request for expedited federal Major Disaster declaration for the State of Louisiana (full letter is in the appendices).

The Governor requested public assistance including direct federal assistance, snow assistance, and Hazard Mitigation for Bienville, De Soto, East Carroll, Franklin, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, and West Carroll Parishes. As of the February 10 letter, the State of Louisiana had incurred over $11,394,460 which meets the threshold for Disaster Declaration. The letter also included both individual assistance and business assistance for select parishes. Damage assessments and estimated costs incurred, however, are incomplete as of the writing of this document.

The scope of power line repair was monumental, not only for Louisiana but for many areas of the southeast U.S. The regional power outage map shown below indicates the general path of most severe icing extending from northeast Texas, across north Louisiana, then northeast across northern Mississippi, central Tennessee, and southeastern Kentucky. North Louisiana and north Mississippi were some of the hardest hit by the system. Utility companies from neighboring states were deployed well in advance; however, given the severity of the storm, restoration times were extended.

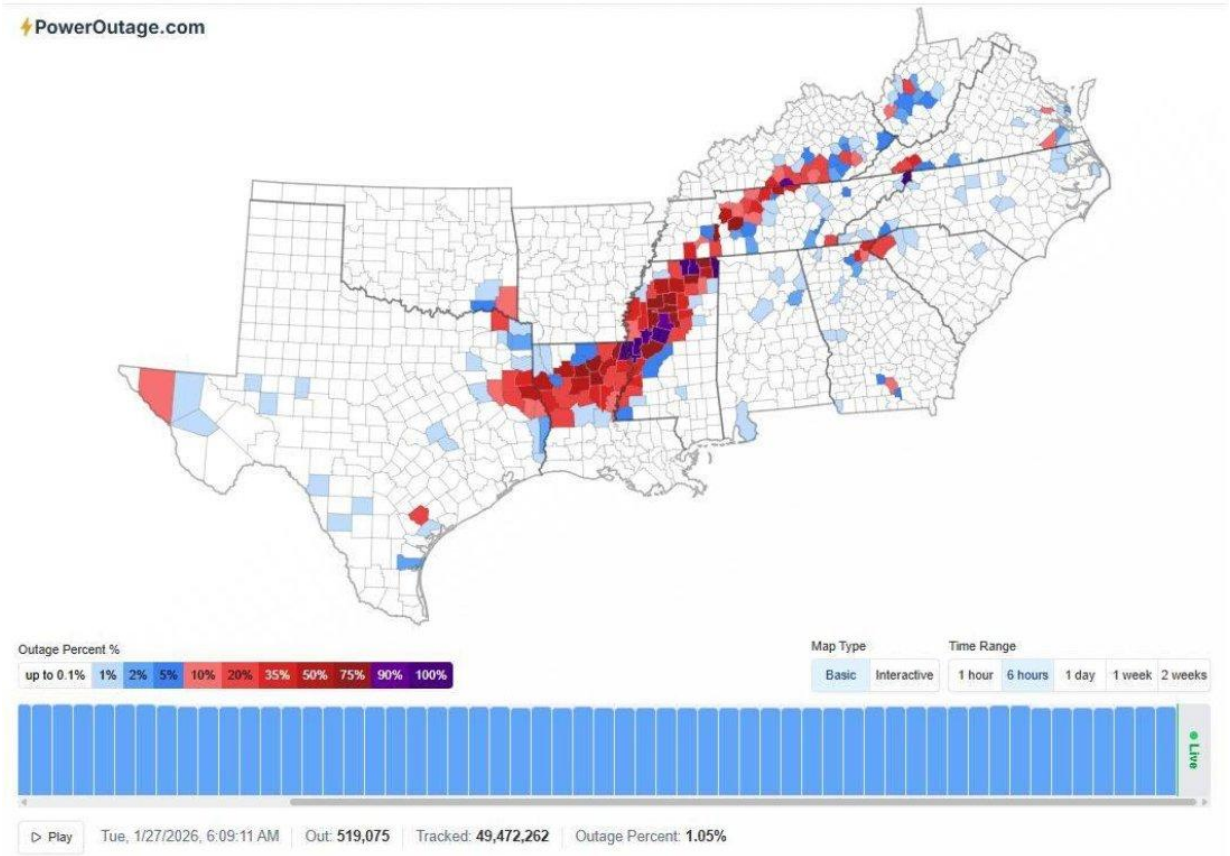



*Figure 13 - Outage Map from PowerOutage.com Showing Large Swath of Outages from Northeast Texas into Southeastern Kentucky. Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 6 AM CST.*

According to Entergy, some 4,400 personnel as part of the restoration workforce. Northeast Louisiana alone was estimated to have 91,500 Entergy customers without power at its peak, most in Ouachita Parish. Entergy replaced some 1,000 utility poles, more than 500 miles of wire, and 210 transformers, restoring power to around 130,000 customers – some of which were repeat restorations due to continued damage during and after the event.

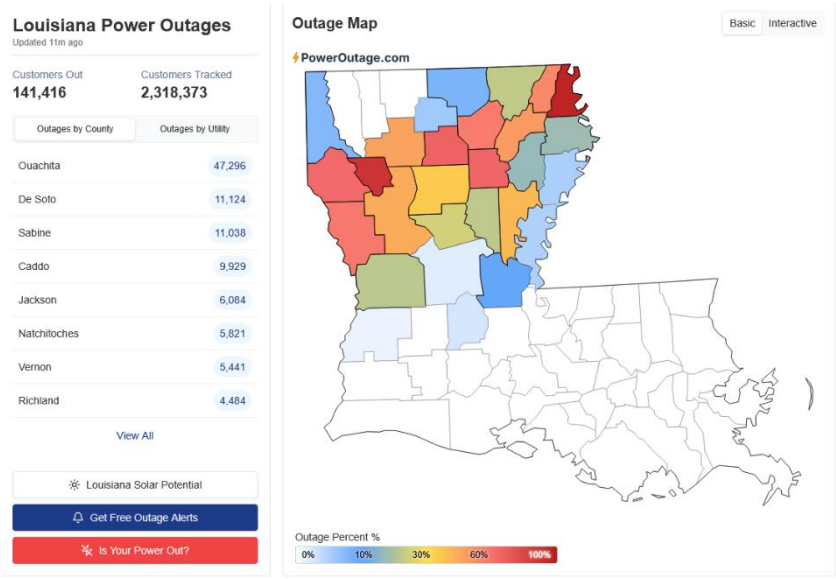



*Figure 14 - PowerOutage.com Map as of 1 PM CST 1/25/26*

As of January 25, at 1PM CST, PowerOutage.com reported 141,416 customers were without power across the state. This report includes both Entergy and non-Entergy customers.

Ouachita Parish had 47,296 customers without power.

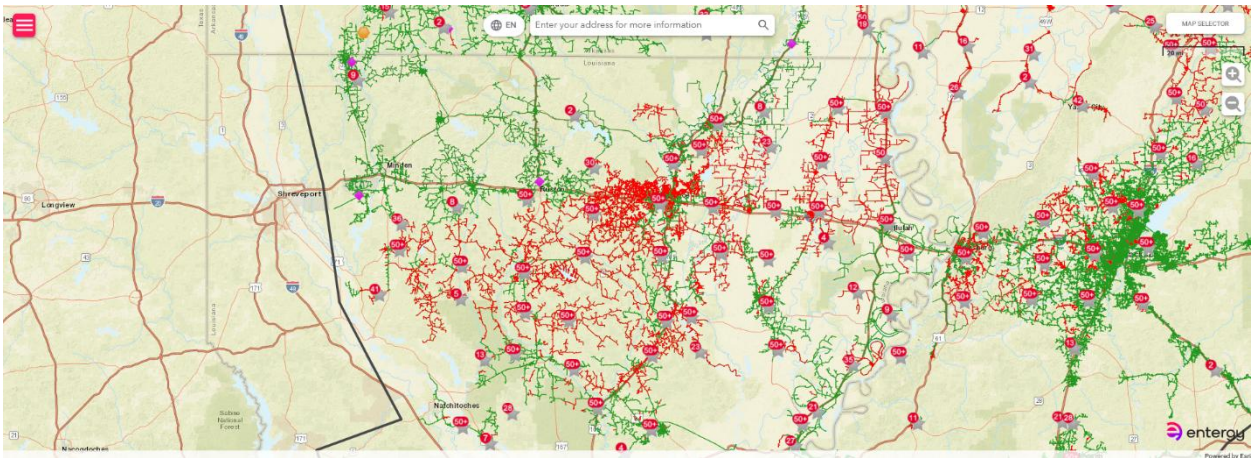



*Figure 15 - Entergy Outage Map as of 1PM CST on January 25, 2026*

While Louisiana is not a stranger to ice events, some are more notable than others. Comparative ice storms would include the January 5-13, 1973, event that affected north Louisiana and south Arkansas and the more recent February 9-13, 1994, ice storm that affect northeast Louisiana and southeast Arkansas. According to Louisiana State Climatologist Jay Grymes, "This storm is destined to rank among the top three to five most significant ice events in regional history." Grymes also compared it to the January 1973 ice storm which longtime residents refer to as the benchmark for severe freezes. As one who personally experienced the 1973 event, this writer agrees.

**Summary**

January 23-26 saw a devasting winter storm composed of sleet and freezing rain strike portions of the southcentral U.S. The most concentrated areas of impact extended from northeast Texas across north Louisiana, then northeast to include southeast Arkansas, northern Mississippi, central Tennessee, and into southeast Kentucky. The storm's impact resulted in widespread, massive tree and powerline damage across the aforementioned areas as well as some structural damage to homes and storage buildings due to either fallen trees, tree limbs, and/or the weight of the ice.

Extensive damage to utility infrastructures also occurred, especially to power and cable services. Entergy estimates that power was disrupted to over 91,000 customers with around 130,000 repairs due to repeat outages. PowerOutage.com reported 141,416 customers without power as of 1PM on January 25 which also includes non-Entergy customers. Entergy replaced some 1,000 utility poles, more than 500 miles of wire, and 210 transformers.

In Ouachita Parish, estimates as of early February show that 7, 542 business and their 122, 943 employees were impacted due to the ice storm's multi-faceted assault.

- Power outage and other utilities
- Business damage
- Lost inventory
- Patrons unable to drive due to icy roads, downed trees and power lines
- Employees not able to drive due to icy roads, downed trees and power lines

Additional financial impacts to businesses as well as utilities, such as water, sewage, and cable, include costs due to overtime pay, equipment rental, and damage.

The United Way of Northeast Louisiana established a disaster relief fund to help Northeast Louisiana families impacted by the ice storm. They reported that more than 10,000 requests for assistance were received for assistance that include:

- Grocery/Food
- Utility Support
- Household Essentials
- Gas/Fuel
- Rent/Mortgage
- Emergency Home Repair

This event will go down in the record books as perhaps one of the top five winter storms in the state's history. It has been compared to a benchmark ice storm that struck north Louisiana in January 1973 which also caused widespread and extended power outages along with extensive tree damage. Recovery and cleanup efforts will continue several months following this event with costs well into the millions of dollars. Perhaps, arguably, damage from the winter storm rivaled that of a healthy category one hurricane.

**Disaster Declaration**

On February 19, President Trump approved Major Disaster Declaration for nine parishes in north Louisiana. They include Bienville, De Soto, East Carroll, Franklin, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, and West Carroll Parishes.

# President Donald J. Trump Approves Major Disaster Declaration for Louisiana

**Release Date: February 19, 2026**

FEMA announced that federal disaster assistance is available to the state of Louisiana to supplement recovery efforts in the areas affected by the severe winter storm from Jan. 23-27, 2026.

Public Assistance federal funding is available to the state, tribal and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe winter storm in Bienville, De Soto, East Carroll, Franklin, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas and West Carroll Parishes for debris removal and emergency protective measures (Categories A and B), including direct federal assistance.

Tonia Pence has been named as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected areas. Additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further assessments.

*Figure 16 - Press Release from FEMA Announcing Major Disaster Declaration*

## Supporting Images and Documents/Appendix

### Tree Damage



Report Commissioned by: Malmay Associates

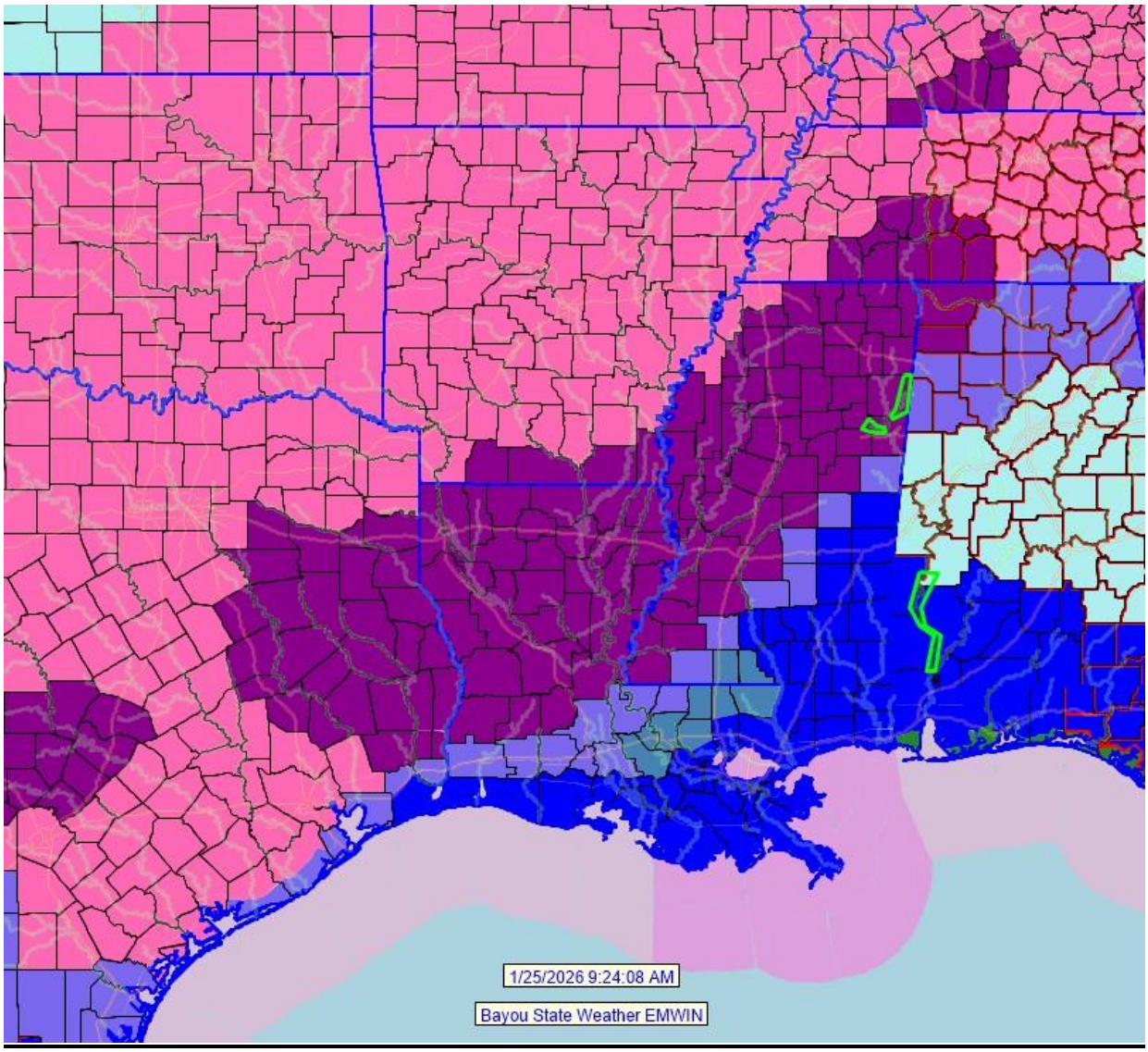
Bayou State Weather



Report Commissioned by: Malmay Associates

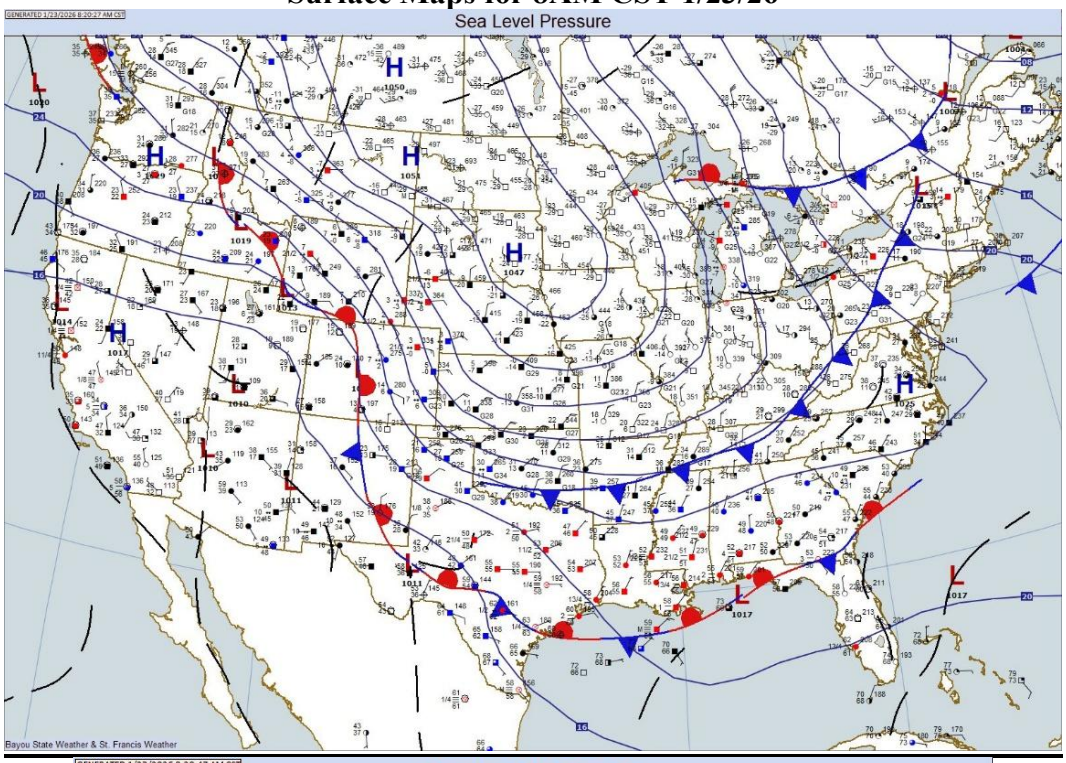
Aerial Images Below are Courtesy of Burt Green/WeatherUP
(https://www.facebook.com/BurtGreenWX)

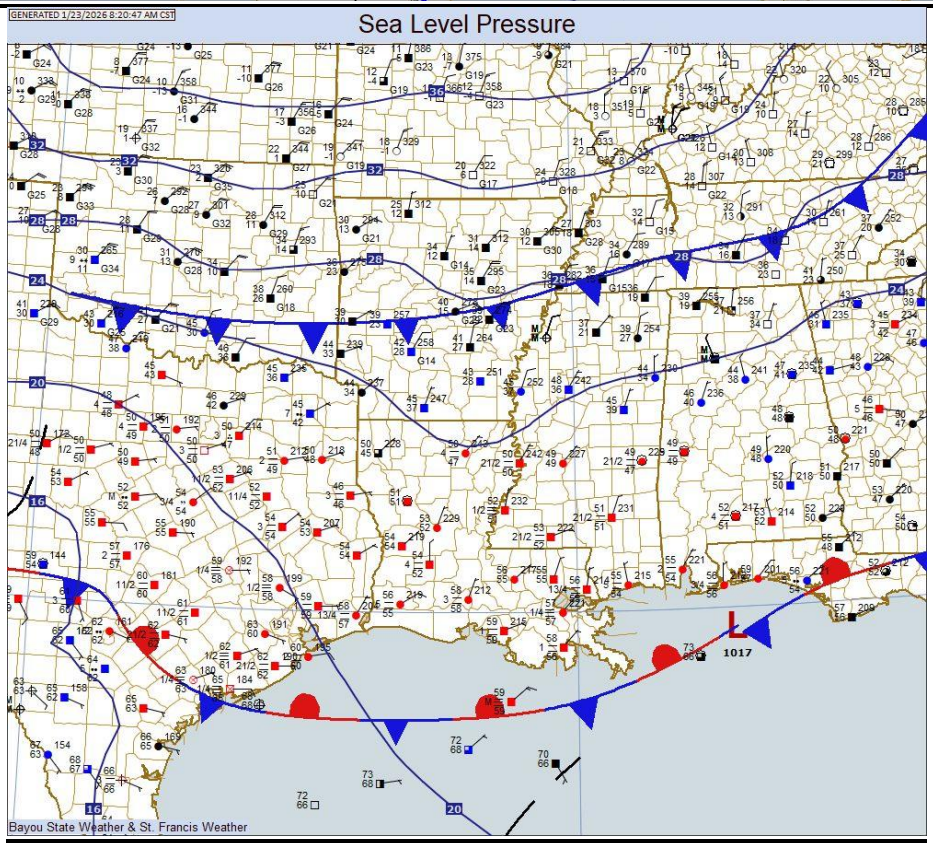
## Maps & Charts




**Winter Weather Advisories as of 1/25/26 at 9:24AM**
**Pink – Winter Storm Warning**
**Purple – Ice Storm Warning**
**Light Blue – Winter Weather Advisory**
**Steel Blue – Winter Storm Watch**
**Dark Blue – Extreme Cold Warning**

## Surface Maps for 8AM CST 1/23/26



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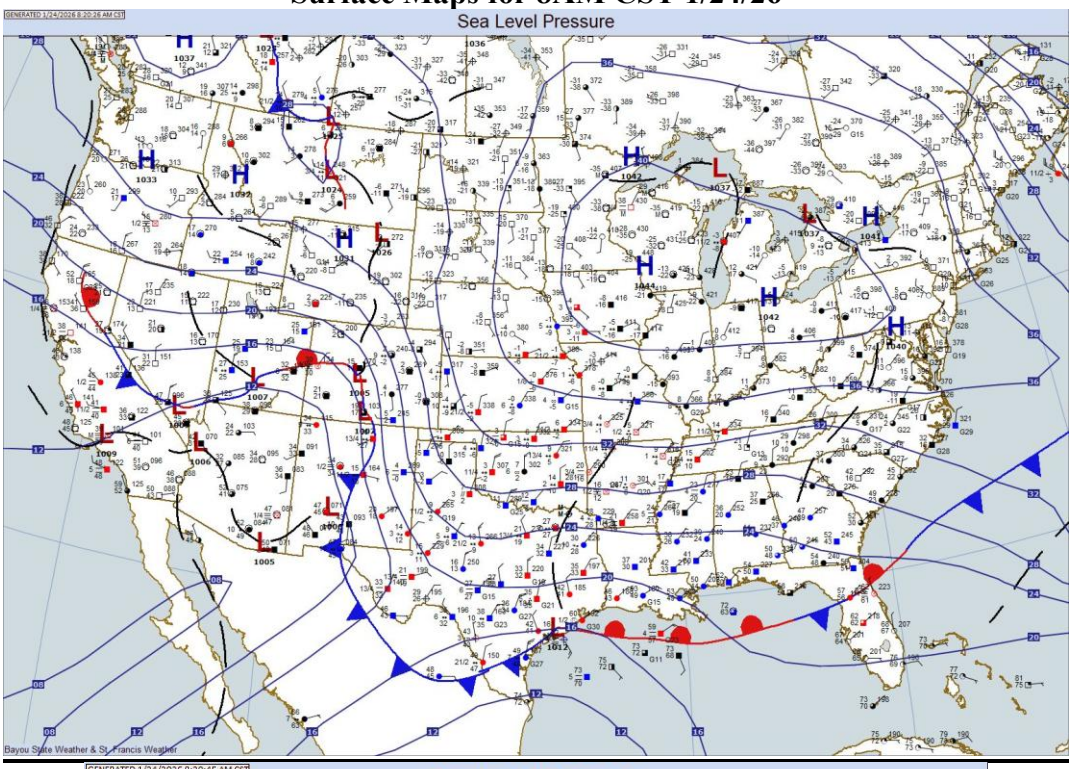
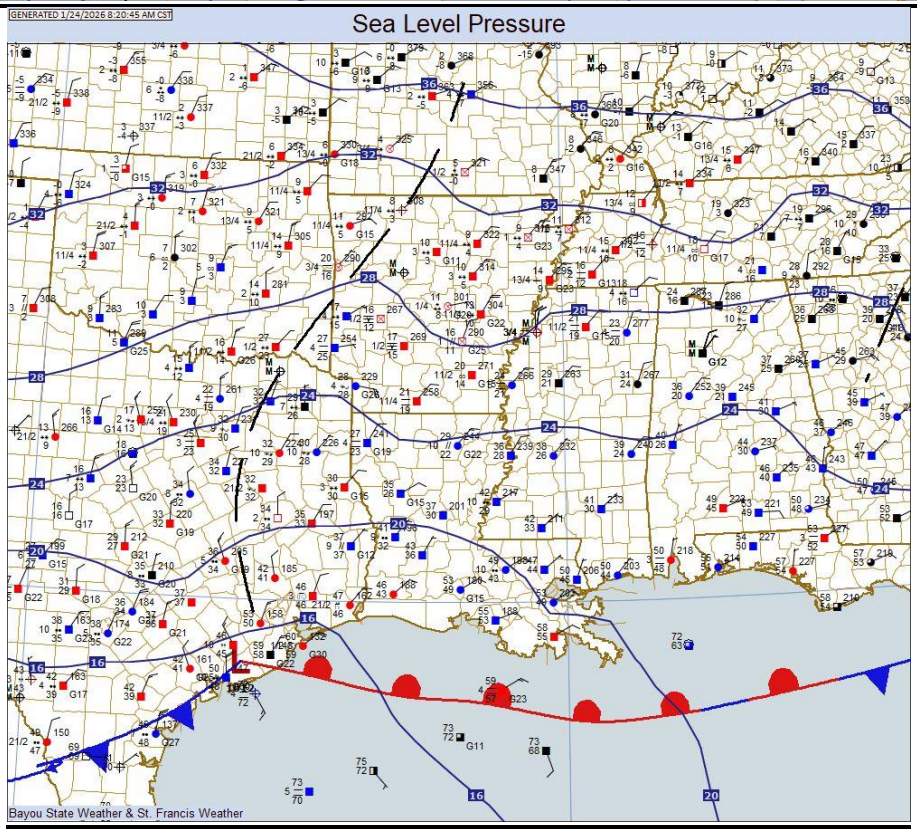
## Surface Maps for 8AM CST 1/24/26



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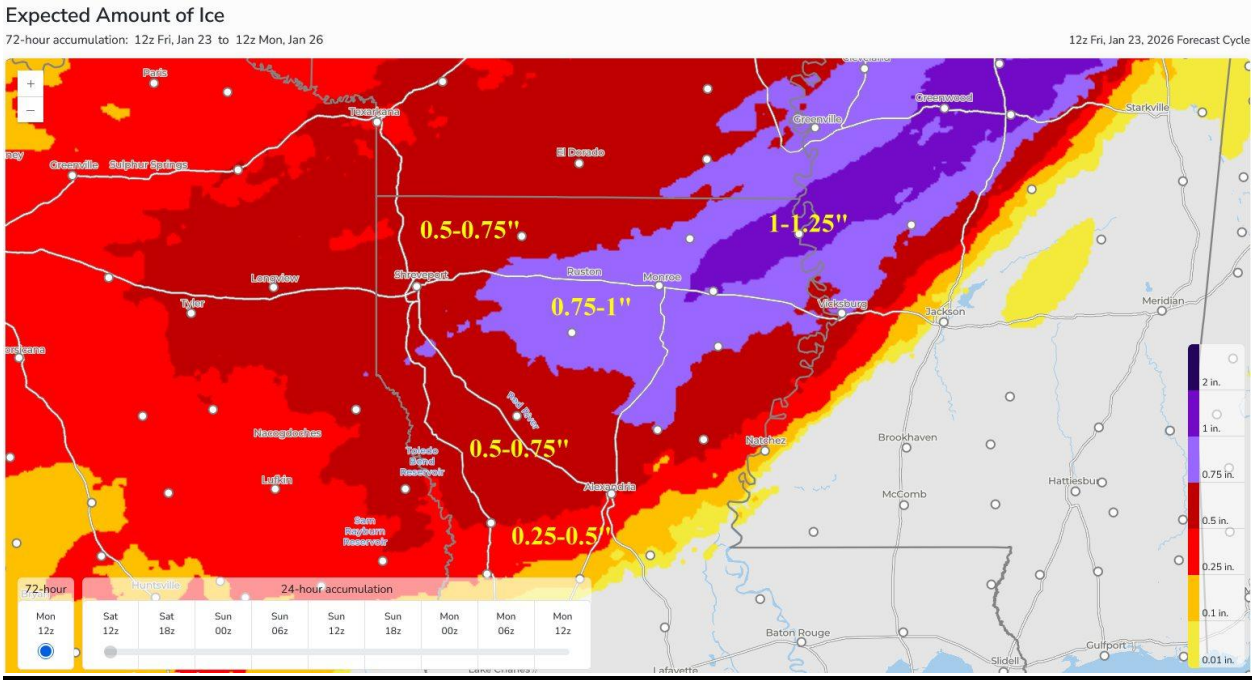
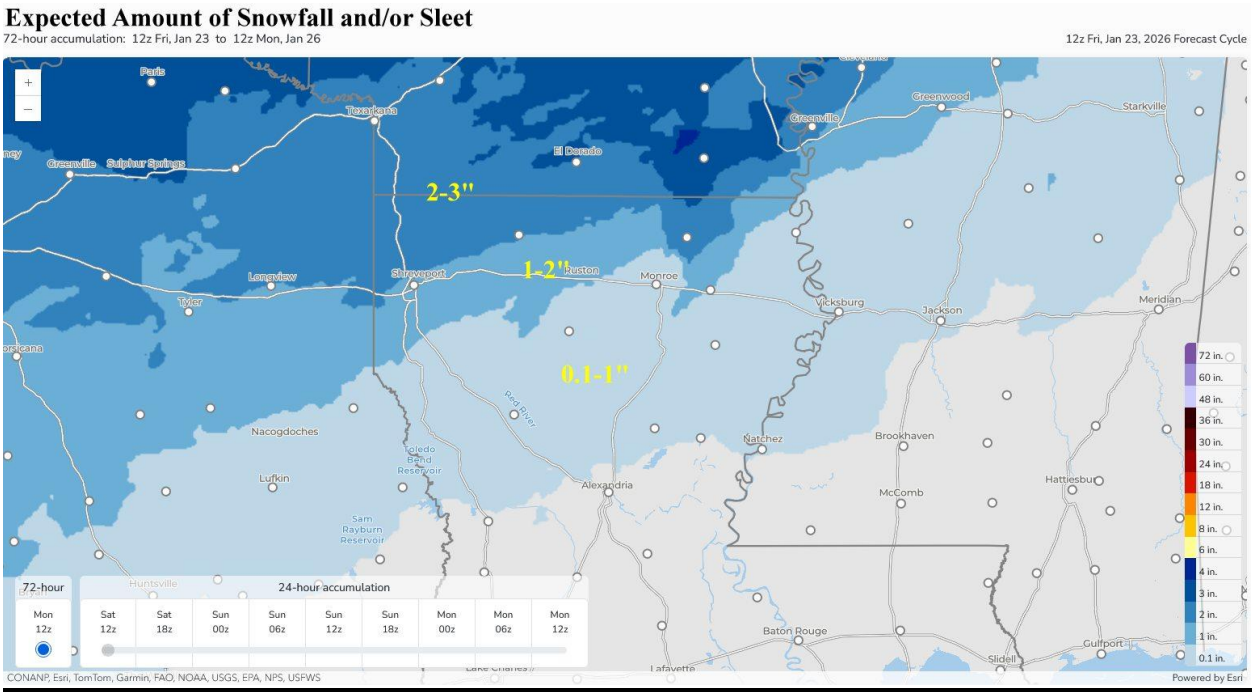
## Forecast Ice and Sleet Accumulations



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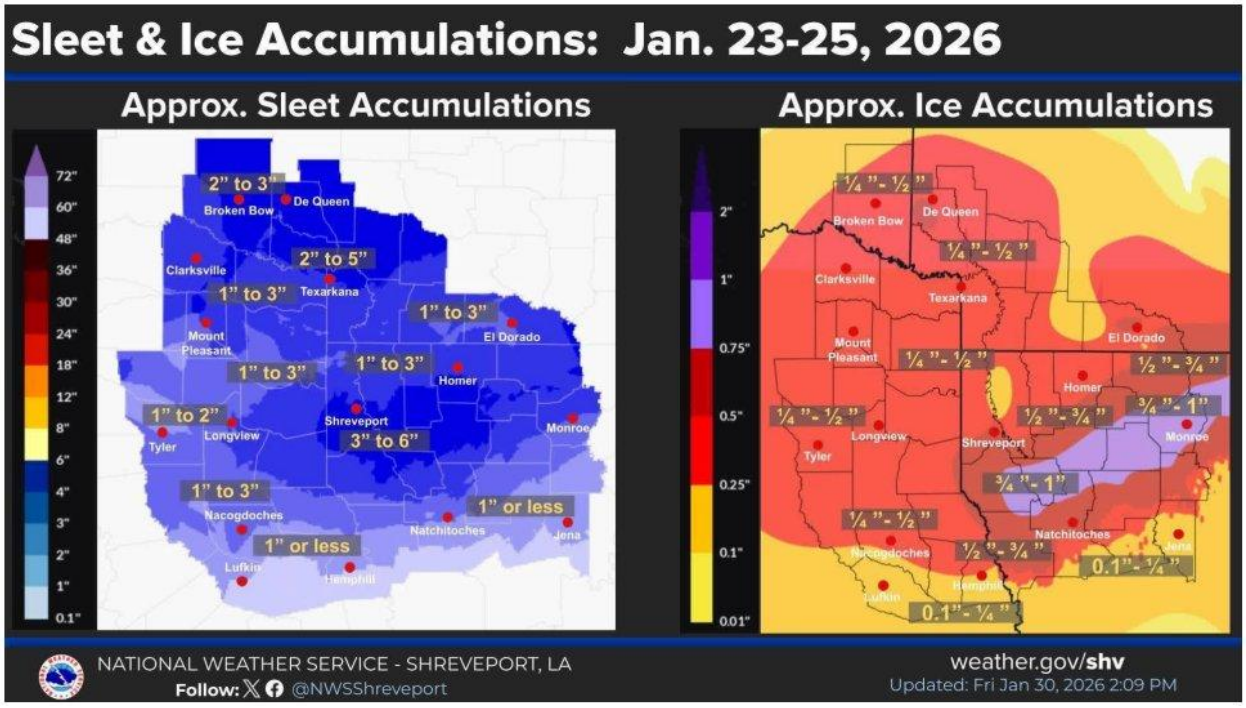
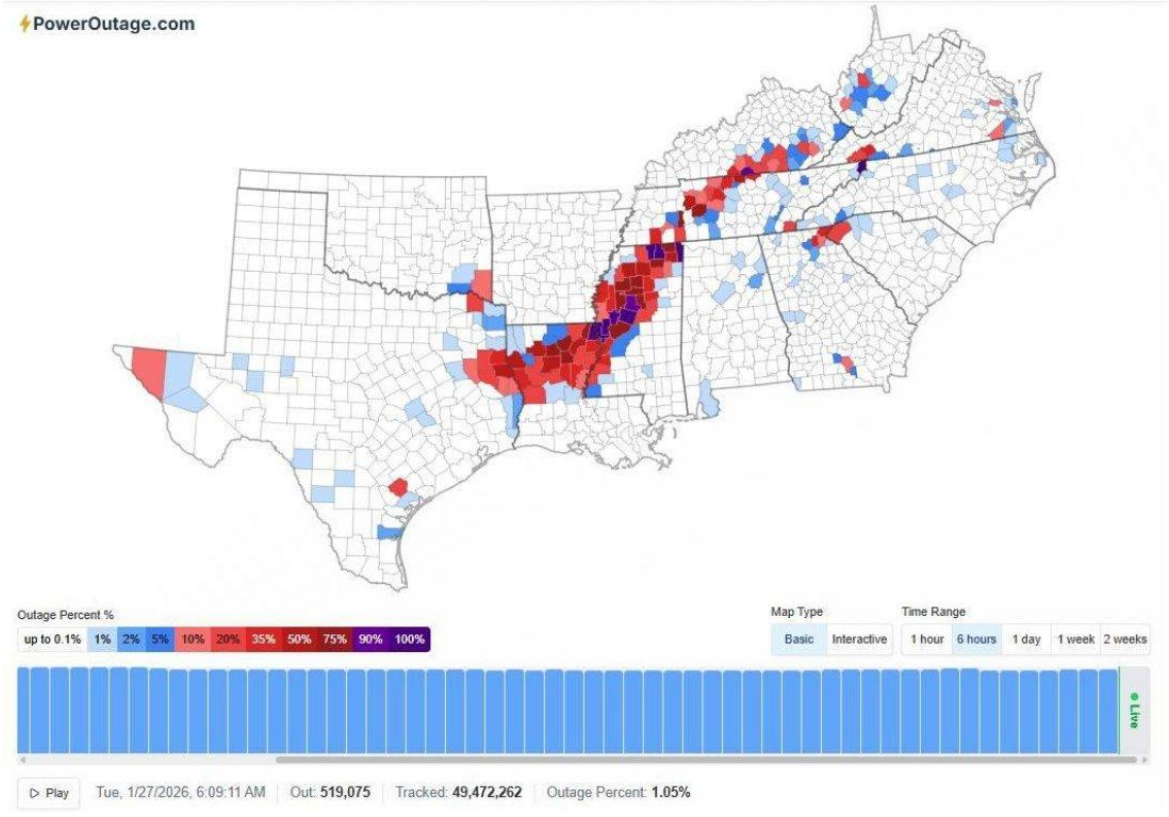
**Actual Ice and Sleet Accumulations – National Weather Service Shreveport**




**Power Outage Map as of 1/27/26 at 6AM CST**






Report Commissioned by: Malmay Associates

## State of Emergency Declaration

State of Louisiana

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER JML 26-006

***STATE OF EMERGENCY***
***WINTER WEATHER PREPARATION – JANUARY 22, 2026***

**WHEREAS,** the Governor is responsible for meeting the dangers to the state and people presented by emergencies and disasters;

**WHEREAS,** the Louisiana Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act, La. R.S. 29:721, *et seq.*, confers upon the Governor of the State of Louisiana emergency powers to address disasters resulting from natural or man-made events that cause or threaten loss of life, injury, or property damage, as well as emergencies, which include actual or potential conditions created by such disasters, in order to ensure that the preparations of this State will be adequate to deal with such emergencies or disasters and to preserve the lives and property of the people of the State of Louisiana;

**WHEREAS,** when the Governor determines that a disaster or emergency has occurred, or the threat thereof is imminent, R.S. 29:724(B)(1) empowers him to declare a state of emergency or disaster by executive order, which has the force and effect of law;

**WHEREAS,** R.S. 29:724 authorizes the Governor during a declared state of emergency to suspend the provisions of any state regulatory statute prescribing procedures for conducting state business, or the orders, rules, or regulations of any state agency, if strict compliance with the provision of any statute, order, rule, or regulation would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the emergency;

**WHEREAS,** a declaration of emergency or disaster activates the state's emergency response and recovery program under the command of the Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ("GOHSEP");

**WHEREAS,** GOHSEP is responsible for determining the requirements of the state and its political subdivisions for food, clothing, and other necessities and supplies in a designated emergency area;

**WHEREAS,** the National Weather Service has issued a Winter Storm Watch for much of the State effective Friday, January 23, 2026, with mixed snow, sleet, and ice creating significant impacts in northern and central Louisiana;

**WHEREAS,** the National Weather Service has issued Cold Weather Advisories for much of the State beginning Saturday, January 24, 2026, with additional advisories and updates anticipated as forecast confidence increases;

**WHEREAS,** icy precipitation and accumulations are forecast to create hazardous conditions that will severely impact roadways, cause tree damage, and lead to power and other infrastructure outages;

**WHEREAS,** further impacts are anticipated due to extreme cold temperatures, with hard freezes expected to persist into next week in the southern parishes of the State and subfreezing temperatures continuing for 70 to 90 hours in the northern parishes;

**WHEREAS,** prolonged freezing temperatures have the potential to damage water systems, cause pipe failures, and disrupt essential services;

**WHEREAS,** extended power outages during periods of extreme cold present a serious threat to vulnerable populations;

**WHEREAS,** parishes statewide may require assistance from the State to provide resources to protect the life, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Louisiana;

**WHEREAS,** this is expected to be a prolonged winter event lasting through Monday, January 26, 2026;

**NOW THEREFORE, I, JEFF LANDRY,** Governor of the State of Louisiana, by virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution and laws of the State of Louisiana, order and direct as follows:

Section 1: Pursuant to the Louisiana Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act, R.S. 29:721, *et seq*., a state of emergency is hereby declared to exist as a result of the emergency conditions that currently threaten the lives, safety, and property of the citizens in Louisiana.

Section 2: Pursuant to R.S. 29:724(A)(3) the designated emergency area, which is or may be affected shall include the entire State of Louisiana.

Section 3: The Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) is hereby authorized to undertake any activity authorized by law that he deems appropriate in response to this declaration.

Section 4: Pursuant to R.S. 29:732, during a declared state of emergency, the prices charged or value received for goods and services sold within the designated emergency area may not exceed the prices ordinarily charged for comparable goods and services in the same market area at or immediately before the time of the state of emergency, unless the price by the seller is attributable to fluctuations in applicable commodity markets, fluctuations in applicable regional or national market trends, or to reasonable expenses and charges and attendant business risk incurred in procuring or selling the goods or services during the state of emergency.

Section 5: Pursuant to R.S. 29:724(D)(l), the Louisiana Procurement Code (R.S. 39:1551, *et seq.*) and Louisiana Public Bid Law (R.S. 38:2211, *et seq.*) and their corresponding rules and regulations are hereby suspended for the purpose of the procurement of any good or services necessary to respond to this emergency, including emergency contracts, cooperative endeavor agreements, and any other emergency amendments to existing contracts.

Section 6: All departments, commissions, boards, agencies and officers of the State, or any political subdivision thereof, are authorized and directed to cooperate in actions the State may take in response to this event.

Section 7: This Order is effective upon signature and shall remain in effect from Thursday, January 22, 2026 until Saturday, February 21, 2026, unless amended, modified, terminated, or rescinded earlier by the Governor, or terminated by operation of law.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** I have set my hand officially and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Louisiana in the City of Baton Rouge, on this 22nd day of January 2026.

**JEFF LANDRY**
**GOVERNOR OF LOUISIANA**

**ATTEST BY THE**
**SECRETARY OF STATE**

Nancy Landry

**Nancy Landry**
**SECRETARY OF STATE**

## Letter to President Trump from Louisiana Senators and Members of Congress

**Congress of the United States**
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 10, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500-0003

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to express our support for Governor Jeff Landry's request for an expedited federal Major Disaster declaration for the State of Louisiana as a result of a severe winter storm during the period of January 23-27, 2026. The Governor is specifically requesting Public Assistance including direct federal assistance, snow assistance, and Hazard Mitigation for Bienville, De Soto, East Carroll, Franklin, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, and West Carroll Parishes. The Governor further requests a 100 percent cost share adjustment for 30 days. So far, the State of Louisiana has incurred over $11,394,460, thus meeting its threshold for a Disaster Declaration.

The storm brought icy precipitation and extremely cold temperatures throughout most of Louisiana, with the northern parishes experiencing widespread power and water outages. Power outages interrupted service to hospitals and nursing homes, forcing them to operate on generators, and caused extended school and business closures. At its peak, the storm left over 175,000 residential customers without power. The ice shut down Interstate 20 and numerous state highways for several days. Widespread power outages and damage to water systems resulted in 32,487 customers completely without water. Up to 187,359 residents were placed under Boil Water Advisories.

We would also urge you to include Individual Assistance in the federal declaration. It is our understanding that the preliminary damage assessments indicate a qualification for Individual Assistance in these parishes. The Small Business Administration (SBA) has acknowledged the effect of this storm on Louisiana businesses and is offering Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) in 19 of Louisiana's 64 parishes.

We thank you for your swift emergency declaration for Louisiana issued on January 24 and eagerly await your response. We look forward to working with you to help the residents of these impacted communities during their time of need.

Regards,

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

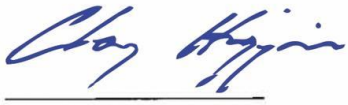
John Kennedy
United States Senator

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House

Steve Scalise
House Majority Leader

Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress

Julia Letlow, PhD
Member of Congress

Cleo Fields
Member of Congress

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 19, 2026
**Contact:** Jamie Hanks, Parish Administrator
E: jhanks@oppj.org | C: (225) 200-4984

# Ouachita Parish Secures Federal Disaster Assistance Following Severe Winter Storm

**Ouachita Parish, La.** — The Ouachita Parish Police Jury announces that Ouachita Parish has secured the federal Major Disaster Declaration, bringing critical FEMA Public Assistance funding to strengthen and advance recovery efforts following the severe winter storm earlier this year.

On February 18, 2026, the President approved a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4900-DR-LA) for the winter storm occurring January 23–27, 2026. Ouachita Parish is among nine parishes designated for Public Assistance under Categories A and B, including Direct Federal Assistance.

This approval allows eligible public entities to seek federal reimbursement for debris removal and emergency protective measures undertaken to safeguard public health and safety. These categories support the immediate response actions already carried out by parish departments, first responders, and emergency personnel during and after the storm.

Ahead of the storm, Ouachita Parish Police Jury President Shane Smiley issued a parish emergency declaration to activate local response operations and begin the formal documentation process required for state and federal assistance. Governor Jeff Landry also issued a statewide emergency declaration, activating Louisiana's emergency response framework through the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and mobilizing state resources to assist affected communities.

Following comprehensive damage assessments, Governor Landry formally requested a Major Disaster Declaration from the President. Louisiana's eight members of the United States Congressional Delegation supported that request, working in coordination with state and federal partners to advocate for timely approval of Public Assistance funding.

The Ouachita Parish Police Jury extends sincere appreciation to Governor Landry, Louisiana's congressional and state delegation, our municipal partners and local leaders, GOHSEP, FEMA, and supporting agencies for their coordinated leadership and advocacy. We are equally grateful to parish departments, first responders, public works crews, utility providers, and, most importantly, the citizens of Ouachita Parish whose resilience and patience sustained our community throughout response and recovery.

This declaration reflects strong, unified leadership at every level of government and acknowledges both the severity of the storm's impact and the important work ahead to restore and strengthen the parish we are proud to call home.

The Parish will continue working closely with GOHSEP and FEMA to advance project review and reimbursement procedures. Recovery efforts remain ongoing, and we are committed to restoring infrastructure, safeguarding public resources, and ensuring all eligible costs are properly pursued.

Residents are encouraged to follow official Ouachita Parish communication channels for updates as recovery progresses.

###

***The disaster declaration process for every Louisiana parish*** includes four pivotal actions; we are pending the fourth.

1. A local emergency declaration
2. Preliminary damage assessments validated with the State.
3. A gubernatorial request
4. Presidential approval if federal criteria are met.

***This completed process triggers Public Assistance (PA) grants to help state/local governments clear debris and protect public safety.***

***About OPPJ:*** *The Ouachita Parish Police Jury is the highest level of government in the parish and is responsible for directing over 12 departments that all work hard to ensure a robust quality of life. Their collaborative approach with other local governments is instrumental in fostering a stronger, more unified community. The Ouachita Parish Police Jury dedicates their time to providing tangible improvements in our parish, making it a better place to live, work, and thrive. To learn more about the work the Ouachita Parish Police Jury oversees for the parish, visit oppj.org.*

## Acknowledgements

National Weather Service – Shreveport, Louisiana
Plymouth Weather (https://vortex.plymouth.edu/)
University of Wyoming (https://weather.uwyo.edu/)
St. Francis Weather (https://stfrancisweather.com)
Tom Malmay – Malmay and Associates
Bayou State Weather (https://bayoustateweather.com)
Burt Green/WeatherUP (https://www.facebook.com/BurtGreenWX)
KSLA-TV (https://www.ksla.com)
Ouachita Parish Police Jury
PowerOutage.com
Entergy