

STATE OF COLORADO

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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

D 2014-004

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Declaring a Disaster Emergency Due to the Rock Landslide on U.S. Highway 550

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to relevant portions of C.R.S. § 28-3-104 and relevant portions of the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act, C.R.S. § 24-33.5-701, *et seq.*, I, John W. Hickenlooper, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order declaring a disaster emergency due to the recent rockslide on U.S. Highway 550.

I. Background and Purpose

The Governor is responsible for meeting the dangers to the State and people presented by disasters. The Colorado Disaster Emergency Act defines a disaster as “the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury or loss of life or property resulting from any natural cause or cause of human origin.” C.R.S. § 24-33.5-703(3).

On January 12, 2014, a large rockslide occurred two miles south of Ouray on U.S. Highway 550 over Red Mountain Pass. This section of the Highway consists of a narrow road cut into the side of a mountain, causing one side of the road to be adjacent to a steep cliff of rock. As a result of the slide, the Highway was closed for 20 days. The Red Mountain Pass is used by approximately 2,200 vehicles per day, and the closure required up to a 201-mile detour.

During the closure, highway crew members initially tried to secure the debris area using rock scaling. However, the area proved to be too large for this approach to be effective. Two helicopters were used to place 36 rockfall panels on the slope. The panels covered a total of 31,000 square feet along the slope side. Each panel weighs about 600 pounds and measures 72 feet by 12 feet.

On January 31, 2014, the highway was temporarily opened twice a day from 6:30 to 8:30 am and 4:30 to 6:30 pm. During the afternoon hours, highway crew members worked on installing mitigation fencing along the roadside. Temporary fencing was installed – 360 feet

long and 24 feet high – to further safeguard travel on the highway until a more permanent solution is in place. All of this work was preformed safely in dangerous winter weather conditions. One lane of alternating traffic was reopened to the public on February 10, 2014.

Permanent mitigation is needed to ensure safety to the public traveling on this important mountain corridor. The Colorado Transportation Commission provided \$173,588 in contingency funding for the design of permanent mitigation. Funding has not been identified for construction, but early estimates of construction costs are around \$2.3 million.

II. Declaration and Directives

- A. The severe rockslide constitutes a disaster emergency under C.R.S. § 24-33.5-704. My verbal order of February 26, 2014, declaring a disaster emergency is hereby memorialized by this Executive Order and shall have the full force and effect of law as if it were contained within this Executive Order.
- B. Pursuant to sections 125 and 120(e) of Title 23 of the United States Code, I hereby find the damage to U.S. Highway 550 over Red Mountain Pass as a result of the severe rockslide constitutes an emergency. The construction of permanent mitigation along this stretch of the highway will ensure safe travel over the pass for local residents and safeguard against future rockslide incidents. This declaration shall permit the Colorado Department of Transportation to pursue federal transportation emergency relief funds, as is provided under the United States Code. Furthermore, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division Administrator is respectfully requested to concur in the declaration of this emergency for the purposes of securing FHWA Emergency Relief Program funds.

III. Duration

This Executive Order shall expire thirty days from March 3, 2014, unless extended further by Executive Order.



GIVEN under my hand and the
Executive Seal of the State of
Colorado this third day of
March, 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hickenlooper".

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor