

January 23, 2026

**EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS**

**OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF**

**STATE OF EMERGENCY PROCLAMATION**

**WINTER STORM**

**WHEREAS**, current weather forecasts warn that a significant winter storm will hit Western North Carolina, including the Qualla Boundary and EBCI communities in Snowbird and Cherokee County, on or about January 24, 2026, and January 25, 2026, with freezing temperatures lasting for several days thereafter; and

**WHEREAS**, the storm is expected to bring rain, snow and freezing temperatures that will cause ice to accumulate and disrupt travel, essential services and systems, and could cause significant damage to public and private property; and

**WHEREAS**, the storm is expected to cause unsafe conditions and a serious risk of damage and injury to persons and property on Tribal trust lands; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary for the Tribe to declare a State of Emergency so the Tribal government can quickly and appropriately serve its people before, during and immediately after the storm; and

**WHEREAS**, this State of Emergency is enacted to facilitate the mobilization of resources, coordination of response efforts, and implementation of emergency measures to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the EBCI residents and visitors to the Tribe's trust lands; and

**WHEREAS**, Cherokee Code (C.C.) Chapter 166, Article II, authorizes the Principal Chief to declare a state of emergency during times of public crisis and to protect lives, safety and health and welfare of people on Cherokee trust lands.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, by the authority vested in me as Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians by Cherokee Code Chapter 166, Article II, I declare that a State of Emergency exists on EBCI trust lands due to the health and safety risks presented by the winter storm expected to hit the area on January 24 and January 25, 2026, and extending thereafter. This State of Emergency is effective immediately.

**FURTHER**, this State of Emergency Proclamation authorizes the activation of the EBCI Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), deployment of emergency resources, issuance of emergency orders, and implementation of protective measures to address the emergency situation.

**FURTHER**, this State of Emergency Proclamation shall be effective starting on January 23, 2026, and will remain in effect until further notice or until the emergency situation is resolved and the EBCI authorities determine that normal conditions have been restored.

**FURTHER**, all tribal offices, programs, departments, boards, commissions, partners and entities, are required to share information, including specific information identifying the location of persons who may require emergency medical attention if there is a power outage that compromises the functioning of home medical equipment and home medical treatment, and are required to coordinate response efforts necessary and helpful to protect and enhance the safety and welfare of persons and property on Tribal trust land, under the guidance of the EBCI Emergency Management Department and Office of the Principal Chief.

**FURTHER**, this Proclamation is essential to the preservation of public order and immediately necessary to serve the safety, health and welfare needs of people within Cherokee Indian trust lands.

**FURTHER**, this State of Emergency Proclamation shall be communicated to all relevant parties, including tribal members, local authorities, and regional emergency management agencies, to ensure awareness and compliance with emergency directives.

**FURTHER**, the terms and directives outlined in this State of Emergency Proclamation are legally enforceable under EBCI law. Non-compliance may result in penalties or sanctions as per tribal law.

**FINALLY**, this State of Emergency Proclamation will be supplemented as circumstances warrant to best protect the people and property of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

**Signed:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mitchell Hicks, Principal Chief

1-22-26  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date