

Disaster News Update –June 9 to 15, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Oregon, Nevada, California, Wyoming, North Dakota, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Nebraska
- **Explosion:** Ohio (Factory), Texas (Factory)
- **Extreme Heat:** Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, Washington, DC, Rhode Island, Delaware
- **Fire:** North Carolina, California, Nevada, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Virginia, Alaska
- **Flood/Flash Flood:** Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Minnesota, Kansas, West Virginia, South Dakota, Vermont, North Carolina
- **Hail:** Kansas, Missouri, Michigan
- **HazMat:** Maine (Recycling Plant Fire), Arkansas (Landfill Fire)
- **Heavy Rain:** Indiana, Wisconsin, Vermont, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina
- **Infrastructure:** Washington, DC (Power Failure)
- **Mudslide:** Nevada
- **Severe Storms:** Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Montana
- **Sinkhole:** Maryland, North Carolina, West Virginia
- **Strong Wind:** Michigan, California, Minnesota, Arizona, Missouri
- **Tornado:** Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Wisconsin:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (6/14)
- [Montana:](#) Severe Winter Storm (6/13)
- [Indiana:](#) Severe Storms and Flooding (6/8)
- [Nebraska:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/30)
- [Mississippi:](#) Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/28)
- [Iowa:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/27)
- [Colorado:](#) Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/26)
- [Georgia:](#) Severe Storms and Flooding (5/23)
- [Missouri:](#) Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/23)
- [South Dakota:](#) Severe Winter Storm and Record and Near Record Snow (5/22)
- [Arkansas:](#) Severe Storms, Flooding, and Tornadoes (5/20)
- [Kentucky:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Flooding, Mudslides, and Landslides (5/19)
- [Oklahoma:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/14)
- [Maine:](#) Severe Storms and Flooding (5/9)
- [Oklahoma:](#) Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/9)
- Fire Declarations: [California \(6/11\)](#), [California 2 \(6/11\)](#), [California \(6/10\)](#), [Oklahoma \(6/5\)](#), [Texas \(6/5\)](#), [Texas \(6/3\)](#), [California \(5/22\)](#), [Florida \(5/12\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Kinder pleads for volunteers to help in NE Missouri (AP, 6/15)

Lt. Governor Peter Kinder on Saturday pleaded for volunteers to help northeast Missouri prepare sandbags as water levels on the Mississippi rose and possible floods loomed. Kinder told The Associated Press that he is asking residents to help with sandbagging efforts in Hannibal, Canton and Alexandria, among other communities. "Local authorities there are simply overwhelmed and residents are busy protecting their own properties," said Kinder, who is acting governor as Gov. Matt Blunt is on a trip out of state. "I know Missourians will respond to our call." Kinder said not enough volunteers were on the scene Saturday, despite requests on Friday for help. Later Saturday, Kinder said he had mobilized 165 Missouri National Guard troops to help the communities. Three teams of 50 soldiers will report on Sunday to Clarksville, Canton and Hannibal to help with sandbagging, with 15 other soldiers providing levee monitoring in Canton. The Missouri Department of Corrections also sent 93 minimum-security prisoners from correctional institutions around the state to help affected counties with sandbagging. Kinder said the state is asking for volunteers and sandbagging equipment and urged citizens who can help to call 211 to be connected with an area that needs assistance.

Indiana Volunteers Pitch In (Disaster News Network, 6/14)

Members of a United Church of Christ congregation here have spent the week helping others. After nearly a foot of rain fell on parts of southern Indiana June 8 and 9, church members have been working to try and save three homes that were damaged by the rising water. Church volunteers will disinfect the houses, pull back the top flooring and attempt to dry the sub-flooring to prevent any long-term damage. Stephen Gray, the conference minister for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ, said initial damage assessments were completed Wednesday, June 11, for farms and residences in some areas. A meeting in July will then be conducted with national church leaders and individual congregations to help determine further needs. David Wagler, an Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteer who attends a small Mennonite church in Bean Blossom, Indiana, asked "Can MDS help?" in response to the surging flood waters that have encapsulated huge parts of Indiana and destroyed 50 homes in a nearby community. MDS volunteers and local church leaders from the Salvation Army and New Life church met to plan how to facilitate a response to those affected by the floods. And about 350 Army National Guardsmen, marines and sailors, were sent to Elnora, on the White River, to help with sandbagging. The cleanup is ready to getting started and the United Methodist Church's Columbia District is making cleanup kits available. Those kits contain a five-gallon bucket, sponges, soap and disinfectant.

Omahans clean up the mess (Omaha World Herald, 6/9)

City officials were busy today trying to get a handle on the extent of damage caused by Sunday morning's tornado and storms. At the same time, the cleanup effort throughout the metro area continued. More than 100 Omaha Public Works officials were busy collecting debris, as were 100-plus volunteers who were dispatched this morning from a staging area in southwest Omaha. Omaha police will patrol the hardest-hit area in Millard through at least Tuesday evening. The tornado damage in southwest Omaha wasn't the only concern. Many trees were

toppled by high winds near 105th and West Center Road, in Dundee and throughout south Omaha, said Omaha Public Works Director Bob Stubbe. Stubbe said he is developing a schedule for curbside debris pickup for those who can't get their fallen trees or tree limbs to dropoff sites at 11th and Locust Streets or the old Millard Lumber site southwest of 132nd and L Streets. In Sarpy County, 20 to 25 homes sustained moderate to serious damage, said Lisa Rink, a Sarpy County emergency management specialist. Willow Creek Apartments near 146th and Harrison Streets also suffered damage, as did several businesses. At least seven houses in the hardest-hit Millard area around 137th and Y streets were so severely damaged that city inspectors classified them as uninhabitable. "We've asked those people to find other accommodations in the near future until they get significant repairs done," said Kevin Denker, the City of Omaha's chief housing inspector.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Minnesota to send people to Iowa to help with flood relief (AP, 6/15)

Minnesota's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will send staff and law enforcement officers to Iowa to help with flood relief. Officials at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety say the help is part of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. The organization provides a mechanism for states to help each other during times of need. Officials in Minnesota say Iowa requested the assistance on Sunday. Law enforcement officers, an Emergency Management Assistance Compact coordinator and experts will travel to Iowa Monday to work in the Iowa Emergency Operations Center. Minnesota emergency medical services and fire support are also on standby.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Water-weary residents returning home after flood (Associated Press, 6/15)

Thousands of water-weary residents across central and southern Indiana have begun returning to their homes following some of the worst flooding in the state's history. "They're returning to their homes," Pam Bright, a spokeswoman for the state's Homeland Security Department, said Sunday. "We're in the recovery stage, pretty much." Most of tiny Elnora on the White River in southwest Indiana was back home by the weekend as high water receded. Only a few houses in the Ellen Street and Cherokee sections of town were still underwater Saturday. "There were a lot of people in this town who sure were glad to see blue skies and no more rain," said Anita Abrams, who owns the only grocery store in town. About 200 people spent at least one night at North Daviess High School after residents were urged to evacuate early last week. Hundreds of Marines and National Guard soldiers and scores of volunteers spent a frenzied week setting up about 100,000 sandbags to protect the town of about 700. "The area around here was like a big city that never shuts down. The Marines would sleep for a little while under a tree and then get up and start fresh," said Diana Moore, whose back yard is just a few feet from the river. Only about 200 Guard members remained out of some nearly 1,000 who were deployed

to help combat the flooding across the southern part of the state, Bright said. Sandbagging also was completed at a levee in New Harmony, where the Wabash River crested at 22.4 feet Sunday. "We're sandbagging to the 24-foot level, so we should be OK," Posey County Emergency Management Director Larry Robb said Saturday. More storms swept across the state Sunday night, downing trees and power lines and cutting electricity to thousands in the Lafayette and South Bend areas. The heaviest rain was expected north of Indianapolis, the National Weather Service said. But flood warnings remained in effect for many southwestern counties, and there was still high water along the lower White and Wabash rivers, said weather service spokesman Phil Gray. The flood crest of the White already had flowed into the Wabash, he said Sunday.

Hundreds ordered to flee homes in Iowa City (Associated Press, 6/15)

A week's work of frantic sandbagging by students, professors and the National Guard couldn't spare this bucolic college town from the surging Iowa River, which has swamped more than a dozen campus buildings and forced the evacuation Sunday of hundreds of nearby homes. The swollen river, which bisects this city of about 60,000 residents, was topping out at about 31.5 feet a foot and a half below earlier predictions. But it still posed a lingering threat, and wasn't expected to begin receding until Monday night. Iowa City Mayor Regenia Bailey said 500 to 600 homes were ordered to evacuate and hundreds of others were under a voluntary evacuation order through the morning. The city had no estimate of the number of homes that had actually flooded. Bailey said homeowners will not be allowed back until the city determines it's safe. Gov. Chet Culver said it was "a little bit of good news" that the river had crested, but cautioned that the situation was still precarious. Elsewhere, state officials girded for serious flooding threats in Burlington and southeast Iowa including Fort Madison and Keokuk. Officials said 500 National Guard troops had already been sent to Burlington, a Mississippi River town of about 27,000, and some people were being evacuated. Culver said the southeastern part of the state was likely to "see major and serious flooding on every part of the southeastern border of our state from New Boston and down." In Cedar Rapids where flooding had forced the evacuation of about 24,000 people from their homes residents waited hours to get their first up-close look since flooding hammered most of the city earlier this week.

Floodwaters continue to creep higher across Illinois (Associated Press, 6/15)

Illinoisans in far-flung regions of the state sought sandbags and higher ground Sunday as authorities eyed rain-swollen rivers, and slowly rising water brought new worry to already soaked communities. "We're just biding the raising of the water and helping people who have to get their stuff out," said George Askew, an alderman in Keithsburg, where multiple levee breaks prompted voluntary weekend evacuations. Askew said water sat as high as 3 or 4 feet in some parts of the small Mississippi River community of 700 residents, about 35 miles southwest of Moline. The National Weather Service said the river was expected to crest there Tuesday just above 25 feet. Flood stage in the area is 14 feet. While 15 counties remained designated state disaster areas, authorities said no deaths have been reported in connection with Illinois' floods as of Sunday. Not far north of Keithsburg, the Quad Cities Area American Red Cross balanced emergency response and preparation in two states. The group set up six area shelters, three of them on the

Illinois side of the Mississippi, and put volunteers on high alert while distributing clean-up kits and financial assistance. "Right now, Iowa is probably going to be more affected by the flooding, but we are operating on both sides of the river," said spokeswoman Leslie Anthony. "I think it's probably going to get a lot worse over the next couple of days and that's when we'll really beef up our presence." Also along the Mississippi, more than 400 members of the Illinois Army National Guard were activated to assist with sandbagging efforts in Quincy. There, the river is expected to crest midweek and the two-lane Memorial Bridge already has been closed. The Champ Clark Bridge about 50 miles south along the river also was closed. River levels continued their ascent in the Rockford area, where the Red Cross reported at least 23 people took refuge in a shelter during the weekend.

Levee bursts along Miss.; 15 counties called disaster areas (AP, 6/15)

Water poured into a western Illinois town after a levee on the Mississippi River burst. About 175 miles away at the north end of the state, residents continued to fill sandbags to keep the rising water at bay, while worrying that any more rain will send water into their homes. In communities up and down Illinois, residents and emergency workers and others spent Saturday doing what they could to handle the flooding, while knowing in the end it may not matter. "If we have another storm like we had last Saturday night the water's got no place to go," said Lee Shannon, the emergency management chief in the far-northern Illinois community of Antioch, where residents have been furiously putting up sandbag barriers around their homes and businesses for days. Forecasters said Mother Nature may not give up so easily and predicted strong storms would strike northwestern Illinois Saturday evening and northern Illinois on Sunday, which could produce more heavy rain. Shannon said the Fox River was expected to crest at a level that is even higher than it crested last August, when the area saw significant flooding. Along the Mississippi River in Keithsburg, a small community of 700 residents about 35 miles southwest of Moline, the concern was not over what might happen, but what already had.

President Declares Major Disaster For Wisconsin (FEMA, 6/14)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Wisconsin to help people and communities recover from the effects of severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on June 5, 2008, and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for the state by President Bush. Paulison said that the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Columbia, Crawford, Milwaukee, Sauk, and Vernon counties. The assistance, to be coordinated by FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. Federal funding also is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties within the state. Paulison named Dolph A. Diemont as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Diemont said that damage surveys are continuing in other areas, and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are fully completed.

Nine Additional Iowa Counties Approved for Individual Assistance (FEMA, 6/14)

FEMA announced that nine additional counties are now eligible for Individual Assistance. Benton, Bremer, Cerro Gordo, Delaware, Fayette, Floyd, Hardin, Johnson, and Linn counties have been added to the May 27 major disaster declaration providing Individual Assistance to help homeowners, renters and business owners recover from the effects of severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that began May 25 and continues. Individual Assistance has now been approved for 18 Iowa counties. Cerro Gordo, Delaware and Floyd counties were previously approved to receive federal Public Assistance to help communities rebuild infrastructure. The total number of counties approved for Public Assistance is now at 15. Disaster assessments of additional counties are on-going.

A look at disaster relief efforts in the Midwest (Associated Press, 6/14)

Some of the federal government's disaster relief efforts in the Midwest states, as provided by FEMA:

- IOWA - After record flooding, FEMA and others are looking after more than 4,000 evacuees in the Cedar Rapids area. Several hundred residents are staying in 10 shelters of the American Red Cross. FEMA will deliver a total 738,000 liters of water, with meals also planned. The U.S. Geological Survey is using equipment to monitor water levels in the Cedar Rapids area, and the Army Corps of Engineers is helping to provide temporary power to public facilities and to plan for the distribution of resources.
- INDIANA - FEMA is coordinating federal relief effort in response to flooding. The towns of Linton and Vincennes will receive more than 10,000 liters of water. Some displaced residents are getting shelter, meals and snacks from the American Red Cross. Residents have received about 10,000 tetanus vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are assessing levee and dam conditions.
- WISCONSIN - FEMA is conducting damage assessments while the state remains under a flood watch. The counties of Dodge and Mukwonago were given a total of 30,000 sandbags from the National Guard. The Guard's engineers are assessing conditions.
- KANSAS - Officials are surveying communities hit by tornadoes. Most response activities have been conducted at the local and state level, though federal resources are available upon requests for assistance.
- ILLINOIS – Officials are making plans in anticipation of flooding along the Mississippi River.
- MINNESOTA - Following earlier flooding, FEMA officials are conducting damage assessments with local and state authorities.

Group hopes to relocate downtown businesses nearby (Cedar Rapids Gazette, 6/14)

The Cedar Rapids Downtown District is preparing an inventory of space available for temporary relocation of flooded-out downtown businesses. The group hopes to identify as much space as possible in near-downtown areas and areas that have not flooded, according to Doug Neumann, the group's chief executive officer. "My desire would be to try to keep downtown tenants near downtown," Neumann said Friday. He said downtown

businesses and cultural attractions are dependent on one another for customers, and the loss of businesses to suburban locations or the fringes of the city could make it hard on those that try to reopen downtown. "Thirty-seven restaurants exist downtown because they're supporting a business park," Neumann said. "Without that business park, we wouldn't be able to support half of these restaurants." About 13,000 people work in the greater downtown area if the two downtown hospitals and related medical offices are included. Neumann estimated that 10,000 employees have been displaced by the flooding. "There's a lot of synergy," Neumann said. "If you disrupt that balance, even those businesses downtown that are able to reopen might struggle." Neumann said the main area of downtown that was still functioning Friday was the area between Seventh and 10th streets southeast.

539 Nebraska homeowners reported tornado damage (Omaha World Herald, 6/14)
Derek Varilek spent Friday afternoon raking the front yard of his Millard home. Raking was about the only chore Varilek could do since his house no longer has a roof and the inside has become a soggy mess. Sunday's tornado left the home uninhabitable, and now Varilek is awaiting word from his insurance company about whether it will need to be torn down. "They need to do something about it quick," he said as he took a short break from his raking. "Pretty soon the smell is going to start bothering the neighbors." Nearly a week after the tornado swept through the neighborhood near the southwest corner of Q and 132nd Streets, signs of the storm were everywhere in the form of bright blue tarps and plywood nailed to blown-out windows. Yards are dotted with freshly cut tree stumps and fences are missing sections. The storm caused about \$2 million in damage to public infrastructure in Douglas and Sarpy County. A figure is not available for the total amount of damage, said Douglas County Emergency Management Agency Director Paul Johnson. According to state officials, FEMA's estimate for the public infrastructure damage in Douglas County comes to \$1.6 million, while in Sarpy County it is \$423,000. FEMA also estimates that the storm caused \$465,611 in damage to Douglas County homes that will not be covered by individual insurance. The figure is \$254,590 in Sarpy County. Johnson said that 539 homeowners called to report damage from the Sunday storm and tornado. FEMA found that seven homes were destroyed, 21 others sustained major damage, 17 had minor damage and 68 others were affected by the storm. Those numbers came after FEMA workers conducted a door-to-door survey of the area hit by the tornado. They applied different standards than the Douglas County Emergency Management Agency, which essentially compiled damage calls from property owners.

President Declares Major Disaster for Montana (FEMA, 6/13)
FEMA Administrator David Paulison announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Montana to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm during the period of May 1-2, 2008. Federal funding is available to State 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 the counties of Carter, Custer, Fallon, and Powder River. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide. David Paulison named Tony Russell as the Federal Coordinating Officer for Federal recovery operations in the affected area.

Thousands Flee Rising Rivers (Disaster News Network, 6/13)

People who lived in downtown Cedar Rapids, Iowa, never figured on buying flood insurance. All the prediction maps showed the chance of severe flooding would come once every 500 years. The last time water raged over the banks of the Cedar River, filling the streets, it was 1851. The water today is six feet higher than that and with rain expected to continue for the next week, the record may hold for decades to come. Jeff Zogg, a National Weather Service hydrologist in Davenport said he was "amazed" by the enormity of the flood in Cedar Rapids and elsewhere in the Midwest. "Usually if you break a record, you only do it by an inch or two." Elsewhere along the Cedar River, in parts of Minnesota, the river has crested nearly eight feet above flood stage. Many homes along the river have basements filled with water, but evacuations are not being enforced. However, in some areas west of Madison, Wisconsin, hundreds of people have been urged to leave their homes because of flooding along the Wisconsin River and streams. The torrential rains have inundated the region. Residents in Iowa, Wisconsin and Indiana have had to evacuate and abandon their homes. Some have returned to find nothing but water where their houses had once stood. The lucky ones find a shell on which they can rebuild once the waters recede. Thousands of volunteers are still piling up sandbags in an effort to hold back still-cresting rivers.

CA Wildfires Threaten Nearly 5000 Homes (Disaster News Network, 6/13)

As wildfires threatened nearly 5,000 homes in California, faith communities are helping residents forced to evacuate and religious leaders are trying to help those impacted make sense of it all. The Felton Presbyterian Church offered its showers to firefighters trying to contain a blaze in heavily forested Santa Cruz Mountains, but instead the parking lot has been become a staging area for horse trailers and the equine rescue efforts. "They went about rescuing horses," said Rev. Ed Snedeker, of the equine rescue units. Felton, a community of about 6,000, is now buzzing with emergency responders, both horseback and by fire trucks, as they try to contain the blaze, which started Wednesday. Flying tankers have also flown over the town, en-route to their drop zones. The fire was about 25 percent contained as of Friday afternoon, aided by favorable fire fighting conditions. "The low winds have helped firefighters get a hold of it," said Snedeker. About 1,500 residents in Bonny Doon, a community of a few thousand residents about 10 miles from Felton, via winding mountain roads, have been told to evacuate.

National Guard Assists Flooded States (US Military, 6/13)

Governors in four of six Midwestern states affected by heavy rains and subsequent flooding called out more than 2,000 National Guardmembers this week as flood waters forced residents from their homes, left thousands without power and damaged infrastructure. National Guard members in Indiana, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Iowa were continuing their support to civil authorities with manpower and equipment Thursday. Helping them were additional Guard members from neighboring states. In Indiana, Gov. Mitch Daniels called out more than 1,300 Guardmembers to assist in evacuations, search and rescue, security, road blocks, sandbagging and other emergency assistance missions. President George W. Bush declared much of central Indiana a major disaster area. National Guard Bureau officials reported that a slew of Guard equipment

was being used to assist emergency responders in Indiana and its affected communities, including 35 five-ton trucks, 37 Humvees, five UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, 26 potable water trailers, 17 light-medium tactile vehicles and five buses. Still other special equipment and personnel include members of the West Virginia National Guard's 53rd Civil Support Team, as well as an RC-26B Metroliner reconnaissance aircraft. Indiana Guardmembers were also delivering Red Cross supplies, equipment and personnel to the town of Worthington. They delivered 7,200 gallons of water to the Shelby County Emergency Management Agency and provided self-contained shower units to the town of Hope in Bartholomew County. In Iowa, Guard officials reported many lakes, rivers and streams were at near record levels, flooding communities and forcing many Iowans out of their towns and homes. Gov. Chet Culver mobilized at least 640 Guard Soldiers and Airmen for state active duty to assist in the state's disaster response. The governor declared 40 counties as disaster areas. The Guardmembers are partnering with federal, state, county and local officials in at least 11 counties and are providing generator support and emergency drinking water. Other Guardmembers are involved in sandbagging and transportation as well as securing bridges. A band of storms that moved across West Virginia June 5 caused severe flooding that forced Gov. Joe Manchin to declare a state of emergency for at least 15 counties. At least 97 West Virginia Guard members responded to affected areas with military dump trucks, Humvees, water supplies, backhoes and other equipment to assist residents and local responders as river levels climbed. The Guardmembers were removing debris with their equipment in at least five counties. The Wisconsin National Guard mobilized at least 80 Soldiers and Airmen on duty. The Soldiers were providing potable water and sandbagging to flooded counties. Officials reported that Soldiers of the 32nd Brigade were tasked to deliver 20,000 sandbags to Dodge County and the village of Mukwonago. Guard Soldiers from the 147th Aviation were assisting in aerial damage assessment missions for military and state leaders. The other states flew similar aerial assessment missions for their leaders. Spc. Cassandra Groce from the Kentucky National Guard reported Thursday that an RC-26B from the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, Miss., arrived in Wisconsin June 11 to fly over dozens of affected areas in the state to provide live video. A similar Guard aircraft from West Virginia flew missions over flooded areas of Indiana.

Kansas towns devastated by tornado (Kansas City Star, 6/13)

According to local lore, a quirk of geography was supposed to protect this town of 1,250 from tornadoes. Dee Corbett now knows it takes more than a valley, rivers and wishful thinking to stop a twister. A killer weather system _ which conjured up bitter images of the storm that obliterated Greensburg 13 months ago _ spawned a twister that cut a wide swath through Chapman at 10:20 p.m. Wednesday. It killed at least one person, destroyed 60 homes and severely damaged two-thirds of the town's buildings. Two churches, the middle school and the high school were effectively destroyed. After thrashing Chapman, the storm spun 35 miles northeast to Manhattan, causing more than \$20 million damage to buildings on and around the Kansas State University campus and as yet undetermined damages to houses and businesses in town. No one in Manhattan was killed or seriously injured. Another tornado killed one man in the tiny town of Soldier, north of Topeka. Across the street from Corbett's damaged home sits Chapman's middle school, its windows blasted out and its debris-strewn parking lot now a command post. "We're just

in shock," she said. The National Weather Service said the storm was at least an EF3 on the Fujita scale _ an extremely powerful and destructive twister.

16,000 insurance claims possible in Nebraska (Omaha World Herald, 6/11)

Four damaging storms in Nebraska since Memorial Day may have generated as many as 16,000 claims for insurance benefits for home and auto damage. State Farm Mutual Insurance Co. has received 3,888 damage claims from the storms, 1,770 of them for damage to autos and 2,118 for damage to homes, spokeswoman Jessica Staehr said from the company's regional office in Lincoln. Sunday's tornadoes in Omaha have prompted 467 claims for damage to homes and autos, she said. State Farm insures about one-fourth of the homes in the state. It's too early to estimate the dollar amount of damage in Omaha, said Staehr and Steve Witmer, a spokesman for American Family Mutual Insurance Co. in Madison, Wis. Emergency management officials are also still compiling damage estimates. Figures won't be available for several days, said Douglas County Emergency Management Agency Director Paul Johnson. Witmer said American Family has received about 200 claims from customers with auto or home damage from Sunday's storm in Omaha. Since Memorial Day, American Family has received about 1,200 claims and has paid out \$950,000 to policyholders in the region, Witmer said, including people in Lincoln, Kearney, Fairbury, some Kansas towns and, after Sunday's storm, Omaha. Jim Bunstock, a Nebraska Emergency Management Agency spokesman, said investigators were still "out making their assessments" in Omaha, but he expected them to be back in the office in the next day or so to "begin pulling the damage estimates for each county together." Gov. Dave Heineman was waiting for that information before filing the formal federal disaster declaration that could unlock FEMA money for the storm-ravaged areas. Heineman's spokeswoman, Jen Rae Hein, said the governor wants to make sure all eligible damaged property is included. In the meantime, the storm cleanup effort in the Omaha metropolitan area is expected to continue for several days.

South Dakota Flood disaster declarations are mounting (Associated Press, 6/11)

County commissions in five western South Dakota counties have issued disaster declarations because of flooding. More declarations are expected as the water recedes and more damage is found. Butte, Haakon, Jackson, Lawrence and Ziebach counties have made disaster declarations. Butte County Sheriff Fred Lamphere estimates that repairing or replacing bridges damaged or destroyed by floodwaters will soar "well into the millions" in the county alone. His estimates do not include damage in Belle Fourche, he said. A series of storms that moved through the area early this month struck at least 30 counties, according to Brooke Bohnenkamp, public information officer for the state Department of Public Safety. Even as representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency gather in Pierre to assist the state, information is still sketchy about the magnitude of the damage. "The challenge with a flood is that you don't know the extent of the damage until the water is gone," Bohnenkamp said. Haakon County highway superintendent Ken Neville estimates that his county has between \$300,000 and \$500,000 in damage. At least one bridge and three large culverts were destroyed by floodwaters. Ron Roth, an external affairs officer with FEMA's Region 8, said it is premature to speculate what assistance the federal government might be able to provide to local governments and private individuals in repairing damage. After emergency

managers have completed their assessment of conditions in their areas, the state and FEMA must evaluate the extent of damages to determine if the destruction meets the criteria for a presidential disaster declaration. If it does, it will be up to Gov. Mike Rounds to request the disaster declaration, Roth said. The governor has declared a state of emergency, which is a "step in the right direction," he said. But, that doesn't mean that financial help is on the way. For now, the financial burden of repairing flood damage will be the responsibility of local governments and individuals.

W.Va. gov seeks federal disaster declaration (Associated Press, 6/11)

Gov. Joe Manchin has asked President Bush to make 11 West Virginia counties eligible for federal disaster recovery assistance from recent storms. While damage assessments are continuing, "it's clear that central West Virginia has taken a pretty hard hit that should qualify for federal assistance," Manchin said. The counties in Wednesday's request for a federal disaster declaration are Barbour, Clay, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Marion, Taylor and Tyler. The June 3-7 storms caused flooding and mudslides that closed access to roads. Manchin's office said more than 130 structures were heavily damaged or destroyed and many other homes still lack water, sewer and basic utilities. The Little Kanawha River crested 9 feet above flood stage, bringing the worst flooding to Gilmer County in nearly 25 years and leaving stranded residents with no place to buy groceries or gas. Manchin earlier declared a state of emergency in 28 counties, enabling the National Guard to send up to 150 soldiers to assist with debris removal and other flood recovery efforts. The state Division of Highways is repairing roads and the American Red Cross has provided shelter, food and disaster cleanup supplies. If Manchin's federal request is approved, the Federal Emergency Management Agency will send representatives to the affected regions.

President Declares Major Disaster for Indiana (FEMA, 6/9)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Indiana to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on June 6, 2008, and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued yesterday for the state by President Bush. The President's action makes federal funding available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures, limited to direct federal assistance, in Bartholomew, Boone, Brown, Clay, Daviess, Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Greene, Henry, Jackson, Jennings, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Madison, Morgan, Monroe, Ohio, Owen, Ripley, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Sullivan, Union, Vermillion, Vigo, and Wayne counties. Paulison named Michael H. Smith as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Smith said that damage surveys have been scheduled and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are completed.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Boys train for disaster preparation, rescue (Virginian Pilot, 6/15)

Ask a teenage boy how he likes to spend Saturday mornings and "sitting in a classroom" probably won't be among his answers. But on one recent Saturday, that's exactly how 10 youngsters chose to spend their time. The boys were taking part in the First Responder Service Program, sponsored by the Iota Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. "I want to find out what to do in different situations so that I can take care of my family," said Robert King, 15, who lives in Cavalier Manor with his mother and grandmother. Robert said he learned the importance of such knowledge during Hurricane Isabel in 2003. "A tree fell on our house," he said. "I knew a little bit about what to do, but I need to know more." By taking part in First Responder, Robert will learn to prepare for disasters, train for rescues and gain other related skills. On May 17, he and the other teens earned their CPR certification at the Norfolk Fire-Rescue Training Center. The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters, or IABFF, provided the training. "Anything we can do to get information to people that could save a life is good as far as I'm concerned," said Robert Sayles, an assistant chief in Norfolk's Norfolk Fire-Rescue Department and a past president of IABFF's Norfolk chapter.

Planners fear costly gas could stall evacuation (Associated Press, 5/13)

With memories still fresh of the chaotic evacuation from New Orleans as Katrina neared in August 2005, officials want people to be ready to move if a major hurricane threatens. But they worry gas prices, expected to remain at or above \$4 through hurricane season, may keep many motorists from filling up when an evacuation is ordered. That could mean they'll run out of gas, block highways and keep others from getting out of harm's way. Their suggestion: start saving now. "With gas prices going up almost daily, you may want to start putting away \$2 or \$3 every week in your disaster kit," said Kay Wilkens of the Red Cross. "So you'll have enough money to fill the tank if you need it." In Mississippi, residents are being advised to set aside \$75, although evacuees can expect to spend much less time on the road than south Louisiana residents, said Mike Womack, executive director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. That's partly because many in Mississippi can head straight inland while the greater expanse of coastal Louisiana means more distance to travel on highways that are routinely clogged even in sunny weather. Still, high-priced gas will affect evacuations, Womack said. "I think the big impact is that some people may say they are not going to evacuate," Womack said. "Or they'll try to evacuate without enough gas in their vehicle. Either way will cause problems."

LA Nursing home patients will be moved, get medical help (Advocate, 6/11)

Louisiana's coastal-area nursing homes are better prepared to evacuate their residents than they were before hurricanes Katrina and Rita, officials said Tuesday. But if those plans fall through, the state is preparing to back them up with transportation. Also new to the mix is a triage center to be established in Baton Rouge to treat those evacuees physically unable to withstand lengthy trips to shelters in other parishes. Many of the changes are the result of new laws and regulations enacted after the deaths of nursing home residents during Hurricane Katrina, including the highly publicized case of St. Rita's Nursing Home in St. Bernard Parish, where 35 of the home's residents died. The state Department of Health and Hospitals did not track how many other nursing home

evacuees died in the aftermath of the storms, DHH Public Information Officer Jolie Adams said. State Health Officer Dr. Jimmy Guidry said if a nursing home's transportation plans fall through right before the approach of a hurricane, the state can provide buses to evacuate nursing home residents to some point north. Guidry also said that if a mandatory evacuation is issued for an area with a nursing home, the nursing home must evacuate the residents. Joe Donchess, executive director of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association, said he has talked to a lot of nursing home owners and not one has said they won't evacuate if a mandatory evacuation is ordered for their area. Guidry spoke about the nursing home backup plan Tuesday at an emergency evacuation bus triage drill behind the John M. Parker Agricultural Center at LSU. Guidry said the state's triage plan is a lesson learned in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Storm shelters in vogue (Associated Press, 6/9)

Leon Raper has something new in his backyard. The 74-year-old might not be able to pick it up and move it; it weighs 10 tons. It's 8 feet long, 8 feet wide, 6 inches thick and if you're shorter than 6 feet 2 inches, you could stand in it. The walls are light gray concrete, and the door is dark gray steel. Also, it's highly likely your neighbor might have one. Or maybe you just got one. More and more storm shelters have been appearing in Lowndes County backyards lately. In the past month, documents show, there has been a spike in the number of shelters installed in the county, due mostly to a FEMA reimbursement program. On April 18, the Lowndes County Emergency Management Agency received \$966,000 from FEMA, intended for disaster relief funding. Since then in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and other severe storms the county office has been giving out the money to people who applied for reimbursement for purchasing their own storm shelter, said Cindy Lawrence, the county's EMA director. So long as the storm shelter will not be built in a flood zone and will cost less than \$3,500, the county office will pay up to 75 percent of the cost, she said.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

LA Officials Demand Answers About Katrina Supplies (CNN, 6/15)

Louisiana officials are demanding that hurricane supplies the Federal Emergency Management Agency gave away be returned to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. Their request comes after a CNN story Wednesday revealed that FEMA had given away \$85 million in supplies that lingered on storage shelves while hurricane victims suffered without the items they needed. In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, Sen. Mary Landrieu demanded answers from FEMA. "While I understand the stated need to save taxpayer money being spent storing these materials, I am concerned that there are still ongoing needs for these type of goods in my state," Landrieu wrote Chertoff, whose department includes FEMA. "Many of these items are believed to be household goods that could help residents moving out of FEMA trailers re-establish their homes," the agency said. The CNN investigation found FEMA gave away extensive stocks of items such as cots, cleansers, first-aid kits, coffee makers, camp stoves and other items that had been bought as "starter kits" for people living in trailers after the 2005 hurricane.

Recovery chief says housing near pre-Katrina level (Associated Press, 6/12)

The new federal hurricane recovery chief says the amount of housing on the Mississippi Gulf Coast is near pre-Katrina levels, but some officials and advocates living in the region dispute the claim. Maj. Gen. Douglas O'Dell based his comment on current housing units and those expected from several projects he said had been initiated by Gov. Haley Barbour's administration. Barbour has said his planned projects are aimed at helping renters and low-income households, but many have yet to break ground. O'Dell was in Mississippi on Thursday, visiting with Barbour and Mike Womack, director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Advocacy groups have complained about the lack of affordable housing, which they say is hampering the Gulf Coast recovery and keeping thousands of people from returning to the region that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. "The governor believes there are a combination of housing opportunities, about the same amount of housing available to families today as there was pre-Katrina," O'Dell said during a news briefing at MEMA headquarters. "It may not be in the same places. A lot of it is being relocated north of I-10," out of the so-called velocity zone. He said the goal is that "families find themselves in comfortable, affordable and sustainable housing across the Gulf Coast" by fall. As of Thursday, 4,018 residents were living in federal trailers. About 2,600 were in Katrina cottages, permanent structures that closely resemble traditional housing.