

Disaster News Update –May 12 to 18, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Oregon, California, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida
- **Earthquake:** Alabama
- **Fire:** Florida, California, Colorado, Minnesota
- **Flood/Flash Flood:** Idaho (warning), Washington (warning), New Jersey, Delaware
- **Hail:** Louisiana, North Carolina
- **HazMat:** Louisiana (Train Derailment)
- **Heavy Rain:** Maryland, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, New Jersey, Missouri
- **Sinkhole:** Maryland, Tennessee, Chicago
- **Strong Wind:** Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Texas, Illinois
- **Tornado:** Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, North Carolina, New York

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/14)
- [Maine](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/9)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/9)
- [Mississippi](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/8)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/5)
- [Ohio](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration - 4/24)
- Fire Declarations: [Florida \(5/12\)](#), [Texas \(5/1\)](#), [California, \(4/27\)](#), [New Mexico \(4/21\)](#), [Texas \(4/16\)](#), [Colorado \(4/16\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Red Cross Seeks \$7 Million in Federal Money for Staffing (NY Times, 5/16)

The American Red Cross, which is struggling with a \$200 million deficit, is asking for federal money to help it meet government requirements as part of a national plan to address major disasters. The Red Cross has traditionally avoided asking for federal money, concerned that doing so would confuse donors, many of whom already think incorrectly that it is a federally financed organization, according to surveys. But at a Congressional hearing on Thursday, Joseph S. Becker, senior vice president for disaster services at the Red Cross, said it needed \$7 million to fulfill its obligations to maintain a staff to coordinate state and federal disaster resources. Under the National Response Framework, which outlines how the nation will prepare and respond to disasters, the Red Cross must have a full-time employee in the 10 FEMA regional offices. "While these positions bring value to the community's response, they were not sustainable under our current budget guidance," Mr. Becker said in written testimony. The Red Cross is laying off roughly one-third of the employees in its Washington, D.C., headquarters, or about 1,000 people, and is paring its regional management. It relies heavily on major disasters

to drive its fund-raising, but until recently, there have not been any large emergencies that captured public attention since Hurricane Katrina.

Isaiah Fund unites relief efforts (New Orleans Times Picayune, 5/16)

A diverse group of faith-based organizations has raised \$4.5 million to create two disaster relief funds that will help affordable-housing projects close financing gaps, help small businesses get back on their feet and support the development of community centers on the Gulf Coast. The Isaiah Fund LLC, a project of Catholic, Jewish, Mennonite and Baptist institutions, is believed to be the first national interfaith fund for long-term domestic disaster recovery. The groups, which have been active in volunteer efforts after Hurricane Katrina, say they recognize that some of the hardest rebuilding work still lies ahead, and providing long-term, low-cost, flexible capital is one of the best ways they can continue to help. "We looked at the tremendous needs that exist throughout the region," said Jeffrey Dekro, senior vice president of Jewish Funds for Justice in Philadelphia, which will manage the funds. The partners in the fund each had money to commit to long-term recovery on the Gulf Coast, but realized that if they pooled their resources, they could create a more ambitious and high-profile program. In coming together, they named the fund for a biblical passage that says, "You will restore the age-old foundations and be called repairer of the breach, restorer of the streets in which to dwell." The two funds, one for loans and one for grants, will initially focus on low-income communities on the Gulf Coast, but the founders hope that the Isaiah Funds will become a blueprint to create other funds to support recovery from future disasters. The Isaiah Fund's goal is to grow the program to \$10 million for loans and \$1 million for grants by the end of 2009 with the help of other foundations and faith-based institutions, some of whom accompanied the organizers on their trip to New Orleans. The offering circular will be sent out to prospective investors next week. The money will be disbursed through local institutions such as the ASI Federal Credit Union, Hope Community Credit Union and Liberty Bank & Trust Co.

OFBCI to Host 'Compassion in Action' Roundtable (White House, 5/14)

On Monday, May 19, 2008, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), joined by U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, will convene a Compassion in Action Roundtable titled, "Partnerships in Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery: The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Building Resilient Communities." Hosted by OFBCI Director Jay Hein, the Roundtable will explore the critical and increasing role of faith-based and community organizations across America in disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Additionally, the event will spotlight innovative policies and technologies enabling public-private partnerships to help build resilient communities.

Volunteers Help AR Disaster Victims (FEMA, 5/15)

The road to recovery isn't always smooth - ask anyone trying to come back from the March and April severe storms, tornadoes and flooding. But because a network of nonprofit, voluntary and faith-based agencies steps in, the road is paved with help along the way. Working quietly in the background of the Arkansas disaster, declared by President Bush on March 26, these volunteers - coordinated by FEMA and the Arkansas

Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) - take on and resolve some of the problems for people impacted by the disaster. Disaster recovery for every family moves in stages from emergency relief, to short-term recovery, and eventually to long-term recovery, which may take years. The help that voluntary agencies and generous donors provide is essential for filling in the gaps between needs and government assistance. In Arkansas, a web-based voluntary agency management system is being used to categorize disaster assistance and serve as a resource for disaster victims. To find out about any voluntary services available in your area, call 2-1-1 or visit the 211 website at www.arkansas211.org. If you are unable to reach 2-1-1, you may call 1-866-489-6983. Some of the voluntary agencies assisting Arkansans recover from the March and April storms include:

- Adventist Disaster Response: Assists individuals, families and communities victimized by natural disasters.
- American Red Cross (ARC): Responds to disasters and provides emergency services such as sheltering and food.
- Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Committee on Relief: Responds to disasters that overwhelm a community's ability to recover on its own. During the Arkansas disaster, UMCOR trained Long-term Recovery Committee members for case management.
- Arkansas Crisis Response Team: Provides crisis intervention in the aftermath of a disaster.
- Arkansas Rice Depot: During the Arkansas disaster, provided flood bucket clean-up kits as well as food in disaster-affected areas.
- Arkansas State Baptist Convention: Supplied food, temporary showers and assistance with debris in Arkansas.
- Catholic Charities of Arkansas: Provides information and makes referrals to services available through the churches to help survivors of the Arkansas disaster.
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Provides immediate response with funding, materials and volunteers for disaster areas.
- Church World Service: Offered tools and training during the Arkansas disaster including organizing for recovery, planning, managing cases, managing volunteers, managing rebuilding and resource development and donations.
- City Team Ministries: Addresses immediate needs and then work within a community to address long-term recovery.
- Lutheran Disaster Response: Ministers to the unmet needs of those affected, regardless of faith or creed.
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: During the Arkansas disaster, created a shed-in-a-box kit, for temporary storage, that could be delivered to disaster and construction areas.
- The Salvation Army: Offers disaster relief response to support first responders.
- Tzu Chi Foundation: During the Arkansas disaster, Tzu Chi issued monetary gift cards to disaster victims.
- United Way: Offers referrals to residents for services in disaster areas.

Religious community extends helping hands (Macon Telegraph, 5/14)

As the early shock of Sunday's tornadoes subsides and the days without power add up,

Macon's churches are reaching out to help. The Macon Baptist Association set up its evangelical emergency response trailer Tuesday afternoon at Glenwood Hills Baptist Church, 3225 Rice Mill Road, to begin feeding those whose homes were damaged in the Bloomfield Road and Pio Nono Avenue area of south Macon and rescue workers assisting with the cleanup. Kathi Kestler, the association's ministry center director, said the trailer will be in operation from 8:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. daily, for as long as help is needed. She also said the Macon Baptist Association, which has 53 member churches, will be forming cleanup teams that will be available to help with cutting and clearing fallen trees and debris from residents' homes and yards.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

[County EMA to distribute 260 weather radios](#) (Ledger Enquirer (GA), 5/18)

The memory of a tragedy 14 years ago in north Alabama has helped spawn a program that could possibly save lives in Russell County. The county Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be distributing National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radios to recreation areas, churches and schools in an effort to provide early warning when dangerous storm cells are crossing the county. Kathy Russell, the county's Emergency Management coordinator, said the office wants to prevent an event such as the tornado that hit a church in Piedmont, Ala., on Palm Sunday 1994, killing 22 people and injuring 90. Emergency Management plans to buy 260 radios and distribute them to groups where large numbers of people congregate. The church tragedy was one of the catalysts for seeking grant money to purchase the radios. "Unfortunately, this was a tornado that had been on the ground for 10 miles before it struck the church," Russell said. "They had no warning whatsoever. So what we want to do is place a NOAA weather radio in every church in the county. They will also go in every public building, every recreational facility, nursing homes... everywhere that we can find to place these radios, we're gonna have one there." The agency also plans to hold information meetings to explain why the radios are necessary and how they are maintained. The Rev. Johnny Rutledge of the Saint John AME Church in Fort Mitchell said the weather radios would be an indescribable asset for churches. "It's probably one of the greatest assets we can have, especially in our area where the population is steadily growing," he said. "It's really important, especially when we are (at church) on Sundays. Communications when dangerous weather is imminent is so important."

[After OK tornado, help is being offered for emergency workers](#) (Tulsa World, 5/18)

Emergency workers who were the first to respond to last weekend's deadly tornado were able to take part in a therapy session, allowing them to share their experiences and hopefully begin a healing process. A team specializing in critical-incident stress management spent Thursday evening with about 20 local firefighters and emergency workers in peer-to-peer group therapy, helping them with their personal needs and providing tools for specific coping skills, said Gary Doty, director of the Oklahoma Crisis Response Network, which helps provide such teams to emergency workers. State agencies represented on the team include EMSA, the Norman Fire Department, the Oklahoma City Fire Department and the Oklahoma City Police Department, said EMSA

spokeswoman Tina Wells. Doty said the response network was developed after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. It slowly disbanded, but reorganized a few years ago after other state tragedies. The network is a cooperative effort of state response teams that include law enforcement, fire departments, social services, emergency medical teams, school districts and mental health agencies that provides the free service to emergency workers, Doty said. "I think we gave them some tools to work with," Doty said. "The good thing about this is that we're there and we can help when we can. Some of these small communities don't have the access that some of the large communities do, so that's why I believe we were asked to help." EMSA supervisor Mike McNeer traveled to Picher as part of the team. He said the response was very appreciative. "We've done a lot of mostly in-house stuff, because that's why we created our team," McNeer said. "We never really had an opportunity or had the right set of circumstances where we could help out like we did."

More Weather Radios For Sale in Wisconsin (Capital Times, 5/14)

A second batch of weather hazard radios is now available through municipalities across Dane County, but won't be available at Madison Fire Department stations until June because the department-run sale needs to be approved by the Madison City Council. Dane County Emergency Management bought 4,500 radios this time around, after the initial batch of 6,800 radios sold out. The fire department's initial order of 1,500 radios was sold within 15 minutes at the city's 11 fire stations during a sale April 26. Fire Department public information officer Bernadette Galvez said the next sale at the fire stations can't take place until the council OKs checks and/or cash (no credit or debit cards) as payment for the radios. The fire department doubled its order this time, getting 3,000 radios instead of 1,500 radios. No date has been set for the sale. The radios sell for \$22.68 each (plus tax), about half the price of comparable radios sold in stores, because the county bought them at cost and doesn't mark up the price.

Another twister reported in tornado-damaged Mo. (Associated Press, 5/13)

Another round of storms moved Tuesday into tornado-ravaged areas of Missouri, Arkansas and several other states where residents are still picking up from the weekend's killer twisters. The National Weather Service said conditions could be similar to those that spun funnel clouds and killed 27 people Saturday and Sunday in the Plains and the Southeast. A tornado warning was issued for southern Shelby County in northeast Missouri on Tuesday after one was spotted there. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. Even if the latest storms aren't particularly violent, they'll make for a soggy cleanup in towns such as Picher, Okla., where Tressie Gilmore and four family members emerged from a pile of debris that used to be their house Saturday evening, shaken but with nothing worse than bruised ribs. On Monday, the 25-year-old joined family and friends in salvaging what they could from what remained of her mother and stepfather's home after the tornado packing wind estimated at 165 to 175 mph slammed into Picher, killing seven. "It felt like evil," she said. "It didn't feel like Mother Nature. It felt personal." Eight of the 23 victims in Oklahoma and Missouri died in cars, troubling experts who say the inside of a vehicle is one of the worst places to be during a twister. "It's like taking a handful of Matchbox cars and rolling them across the kitchen floor," Sgt. Dan Bracker of the Missouri State Highway Patrol said, surveying the damage in and

around Seneca, near the Oklahoma line. "This is devastating." Two people were killed in Georgia, where meteorologists said at least six tornadoes touched down. Another man was killed in northern Alabama when his truck was struck by a falling tree limb as he was surveying storm damage.

Dozens of homes lost as Florida battles wildfires (AP, 5/13)

Relentless wildfires burned Tuesday morning across Florida's Atlantic coast, taxing firefighters and overwhelming residents trying to save their homes with garden hoses. Firefighters in Brevard County were working for a third day trying to stop flames that have destroyed four homes and damaged about 70. The state's largest blaze has charred about 3,800 acres, or nearly 6 square miles, in the neighboring towns of Palm Bay and Malabar. "Every time I turn around another house is on fire. We don't have enough resources on our own to do a job like this," said Palm Bay spokeswoman Yvonne Martinez. Officials expressed concern early Tuesday after flare-ups overnight. Flare-ups when humidity is higher can be a bad sign because fire spreads even more quickly during the drier and windier daylight hours, said Palm Bay Assistant Fire Chief Jim Stables. "It's going to be challenging to get the fire under control," he said. All 18 schools in Palm Bay, including charter schools, were closed Tuesday. Smoke and the proximity of the flames have caused the intermittent closure of major highways in the area, including a 34-mile section of Interstate 95 south of the fires that was closed again midmorning Tuesday. "Flames are coming onto the interstate," Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Kim Miller said. One of the homes destroyed in Malabar belonged to Butch Vanfleet, who built the home in 1980 and tried in vain to protect it with a garden hose. "It's devastation," he said. "All you see is nothing but ash in between the palm trees and the palmetto. There's no grass. The fire just came so quickly, we barely got out of there." Gov. Charlie Crist declared a state of emergency Monday as dry, windy weather worsened conditions. His orders allow Florida to use federal funds and bring local emergency workers under state control. It also allows Florida to call on other states for help, if necessary.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Derailed Train in LA Causes Evacuation (CNN, 5/18)

Hazardous materials teams are still cleaning up a toxic chemical spill from a train derailment in Lafayette, Louisiana, on Saturday that forced 3,000 people from their homes. "Hazmat says that clean up is moving quickly and on track," Lafayette police said Sunday in a statement. Two train cars leaked highly corrosive hydrochloric acid after the six-car train jumped the tracks Saturday about 2:30 a.m. CT (3:30 a.m. ET), according to police. The chemical spill caused a toxic cloud to form above the site. Lafayette authorities evacuated about 3,500 homes and businesses -- including a nursing home -- within a mile of the derailment location. The Red Cross opened a shelter at Carencro High School for residents to stay Saturday night, while another 40 to 50 families were put up at hotel rooms, police said. Residents will be allowed to return home once the spill is contained and no longer dangerous, said Joe Faust, a spokesman for BNSF Railway, which operates the train cars.

Tornado response surprises some residents (Macon Telegraph (GA), 5/18)

As the sky cleared and the damage from last Sunday's tornado became clear, there was a word pursued on plenty of lips in south Macon neighborhoods. Katrina. The one-word description that encapsulates inept government response to a natural disaster. Then a wonderful thing happened, people hard hit by the storm said. Sheriff's deputies and police officers came by to make sure folks were OK. Public works crews took chain saws to the trees blocking roads. Volunteers started showing up to help. A disaster became a chance to shine. How else could Roderick Cromartie smile as he surveyed his Nisbet Drive home in the city's southwest corner? A tree cut his house in half, his kid's high school was closed by the storm and his street was one of the last in Macon to have the power turned back on. But he called government response to the storm "pretty good." "Our street got pretty clear pretty fast," Cromartie said. On Berkshire Drive, near the corner of Eisenhower Parkway and Pio Nono Avenue, Robert C. Paul gave public works crews and the power company even higher marks. "Great," he said. "They had 'em in here, man. They had 'em in here."

Blunt requests presidential declaration of disaster areas (KS City Star, 5/17)

Gov. Matt Blunt on Friday asked President Bush to declare as disaster areas six Missouri counties hit by recent tornadoes. If Bush approves the request, state and local governments can seek grant reimbursements for the extra costs of emergency services and damage to public infrastructure. Private property owners would be eligible to seek grants and low-interest federal loans. In two separate requests submitted Friday to FEMA, Blunt asked for aid to victims of the May 2 tornadoes that primarily damaged the Northland and the May 10 tornadoes that killed 16 people in southwest Missouri. "The two separate tornado events were devastating to our citizens," the governor said. "While I understand FEMA might prefer two separate disaster requests, I hope the President will combine both events into one declaration to better assist in the recovery efforts in the affected areas." Blunt is seeking \$2.5 million in public aid for tornadoes or severe storms that struck May 2, said spokeswoman Jessica Robinson. Two twisters ripped through Gladstone and Kansas City, North. There was also straight-line wind damage in Independence. Also included in the assessment for that day is storm damage in Douglas County, southeast of Springfield, Mo. The governor requested the declaration for all of Clay, Jackson and Douglas counties. Blunt's request states that 82 homes were destroyed or severely damaged in the storms, Robinson said. An additional 1,800 homes were affected or had minor damage, according to reports submitted to the governor by the State Emergency Management Agency. Gladstone city officials are estimating the total property damage in the city at \$50 million, said city spokesman Richard King. That includes 19 businesses damaged and one destroyed. The city sustained \$500,000 damage to public properties, including to the roof of City Hall and to public works buildings.

Wildfires Damage More Homes in Florida (Disaster News Network, 5/16)

Deputy Mayor Ed Geier stood in the parking lot of Bayside High School a few hours before dawn earlier this week after the fires – all nine of which have been deemed to have been intentionally set – began burning out of control in Palm Bay, FL, and shook his head. "It's just horrible...awful," he said. "I've been driving around all night and there are

places where there used to be houses that are just piles of ash and the woods all around them are in flames." Palm Bay, located south of Melbourne on Florida's east coast, is 101 square miles of neat clusters of modest homes nestled in between what was, until last weekend, lots of green spaces. The green, in many locations, is now black and ashy – a smoldering negative image of what was once there. Some 4,300 acres of woods, mostly pine and saw palmetto, were charred within the city limits - in the surrounding unincorporated areas around the city, the figure neared 10,000 acres. More tragically, 30 homes were completely destroyed and 120 more were damaged by the flames. Geier said he fears the economy may have produced an additional casualty – many fire victims have told him they had let their homeowners insurance lapse in order to save money. "We haven't done any assessment yet, but a lot more people than I would have liked said that to me," he noted. Florida is experiencing an exceptionally dry spring. Humidity levels are regularly below 30 percent with winds gusting on some days to more than 20 miles per hour for hours on end. It's a firefighter's nightmare.

MO, OK Residents Face Significant Rebuilding (Disaster News Network, 5/16)

The Rev. Jim Wilson did something on Mother's Day Sunday he had never done before. Wilson, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Seneca, conducted Sunday morning services, but he cancelled the evening services, and he and about 75 of his parishioners went out to clean up the damage brought on by tornadoes the day before. "We went out and tore a house down from top to bottom," he said. The tornadoes that ripped through this southwestern corner of Missouri started in Oklahoma and raced southeast, killing people in their homes and their parked cars after it became impossible to drive in the ensuing downpour of rain and hail. Seneca is located in Newton County, and about six miles north in and around State Route 43, 14 people died. Six died in their cars, and 14 died in their homes in this rural area. More than 140 homes were destroyed in the county, and 51 received major damage. Another 235 homes suffered minor or roof damage. "There's a tremendous amount of damage," said Gary Roark, Newton County's emergency management director. Roark said Newton County and FEMA officials have been meeting to assess the damage, so that they help people get started with the rebuilding process. Back in Seneca, Wilson's congregation had two parishioners that lost their homes and their church suffered some roof damage. And during the week since the storms, Wilson's congregation has been collecting food, water and toiletries and distributing to those in need in and around Seneca, from a tractor-trailer, and raised another \$5,000 to help with local relief.

Residents wait for aid in Earle Arkansas AR Democrat Gazette, 5/16)

Two weeks after a tornado blew away part of this town in rural Crittenden County, residents loaded up on donated supplies while they continue to wait for federal aid. On Thursday, at least 100 people who saw their homes and cars crumple in the wind and food spoil in power failures that followed the May 2 storms waited outside Earle High School to get food, paper towels, clothes and other necessities. They are among untold number of residents across the state waiting to hear if May storms caused enough damage to get grants and loans from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. May storms damaged at least 674 homes, destroying 181, according to figures released by the state Thursday. The May 2 storms alone caused an estimated \$3.4 million in damage to public

infrastructure such as highways, roads and government buildings. An estimate was not available for the May 10 storms that hit Stuttgart hard. Government help is the only way 25-year-old Sara McDaniel can begin to start piecing her life back together after a May 2 tornado leveled the home she was renting outside Earle. All of her belongings were blown to bits, scattered in fields up to a mile away. Only a few pieces of clothing were salvageable. The American Red Cross is paying a month's rent at a new place, but her job at an auto parts store won't begin to give her enough money to get back to normal, she said. "I have nothing," she said while waiting in line to get supplies. The one-day event organized by the Catholic Charities of Arkansas was the second of its kind this month. A similar event last week at the Arkansas Rice Depot in southwest Little Rock served 129 adults and children. More relief fairs are to come, including one in Stuttgart, organizers said. This week, the state amended its request for federal aid, hoping to bolster its chances of getting a disaster declaration for the May 2 storms, said Richard Griffin, a disaster management chief for the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management.

Governor Perdue Asks President for Major Disaster Declaration (States News, 5/16)

Governor Sonny Perdue asked President Bush for a major disaster declaration to assist residents and local governments in Bibb, Carroll, Crawford, Douglas, Emanuel, Glynn, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Laurens, McIntosh, Truetlen, Twiggs and Wilkinson counties with emergency response measures and aid for losses resulting from the severe weather and tornadoes that occurred on Sunday, May 11, 2008. "These tornadoes devastated businesses, homes and families a" disrupting lives across the state," said Governor Sonny Perdue. "I am optimistic that our federal partners will recognize the dramatic extent of this damage and will render the appropriate assistance to help Georgians recover and rebuild in the aftermath of this severe weather." Several injuries were reported and three people were killed by the severe weather on Mother's Day, May 11, 2008. A man died in Laurens County near Dublin when his home was destroyed by a tornado, a woman was struck and killed in Duluth by a falling tree limb that was snapped by high winds and a man died after being struck when high winds toppled a tree in Winder. The disaster declaration is requested as the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) continues to work with local officials to assess and recover from the damages caused by the storms. GEMA officials estimate initial governmental response and clean up efforts will exceed \$11 million. The request is for Public Assistance with emergency protective measures, debris removal and public buildings. This request also includes Individual Assistance for affected households. Approximately 2,100 homes were impacted statewide. The residents of 650 of those homes will need help with repair or replacement costs.

Disaster Assistance Approved for Penobscot County, ME (FEMA, 5/16)

Residents of Penobscot County can now register for federal disaster assistance for damages related to the flood event that struck Maine beginning April 28. This aid is in addition to that already approved following the declaration of a federal disaster by President Bush on May 9. Individuals or Households in Penobscot County can register for assistance online at www.fema.gov or by calling toll-free 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week until further notice. Those with speech or hearing impairment may call TTY 1-800-462-7585. "Now more Mainers will be able to

receive assistance," said Ginnie Ricker, state coordinating officer for the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). "It's also important to note that residents who have called Maine 2-1-1 or the Red Cross will now need to contact FEMA." Disaster assistance for individuals provided by FEMA and MEMA may include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. SBA disaster loans can also be used to replace personal property lost by renters or homeowners. "This additional assistance is another demonstration that the federal government and Maine are partners in the recovery process. We will continue to work with the state to address the needs of those affected by this event," said Phil Parr, federal coordinating officer.

MO Gov Seeks 2 Federal Declarations for Tornadoes (States News Service, 5/16)

Gov. Matt Blunt today asked President Bush to quickly approve two separate Disaster Declarations for both Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for Clay, Douglas and Jackson Counties impacted by the May 2 tornadoes, and Barry, Jasper and Newton Counties impacted by the May 10, 2008 tornadoes. "The two separate tornado events were devastating to our citizens. I appreciated the recent visit by Homeland Security Chertoff and FEMA Administrator Paulison which gave me the opportunity to show them first hand the destruction caused by the tornadoes in Southwest Missouri," Gov. Blunt said. "While I understand FEMA might prefer two separate disaster requests, I hope the President will combine both events into one declaration to better assist in the recovery efforts in the affected areas." The May 10 tornadoes caused 16 deaths and more than 200 storm related injuries, in addition to leaving 9000 customers without power in Barry, Jasper and Newton Counties. The damage assessments were completed on May 15th. The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments included inspections of more than 550 damaged primary residences in the three counties. Teams identified 154 homes that were destroyed and 58 homes that had major damage. The teams also identified \$6.2 million in costs to public infrastructure. As a result of the May 2 tornadoes, teams identified 82 homes that were destroyed or that had major damage and more than 1800 homes that were affected in Clay, Douglas and Jackson Counties. The teams identified \$2.5 million in costs to public infrastructure.

Disaster Assistance Approved for Penobscot County, ME (FEMA, 5/16)

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Response To Flooding Challenges MS (Disaster News Network, 5/15)

Near record flooding in Mississippi is presenting recovery challenges to residents who were forced from their homes early last month. Sandra Braasch, vice-president of

Mississippi VOAD, said she will be meeting again this week with volunteer agencies to try and determine the long term recovery needs facing residents following the storms and flooding that hit the state this spring. "We're responding with buckets and all the way toward a long-term recovery," said Braasch. And as the director of disaster response for the Lutheran-Episcopal Services in Mississippi, Braasch said she's staying in contact with congregations in the affected parts of the state to keep up with the needs facing those communities. "We're just trying to work together," she said. The Salvation Army helped residents in April who were affected by flooding on the Mississippi River. The river crested at 50.9 feet April 19, just below the record of 51.6 feet in 1973. Vicksburg's flood stage is 43 feet and as of last week, it still hovered around that mark. A presidential disaster declaration was issued last week. Capt. Patrick Lyons, a corps officer based in Vicksburg, said FEMA officials will be arriving soon to meet with those residents who incurred damage from the flooding in Warren, Claiborne and Issaquena counties. Most of those, he said, lived in a housing area known as the Ford subdivision, north of the city along the Yazoo River, a Mississippi River tributary that backed up when the Mississippi rose above flood stage. Lyons said the Salvation Army issued more than 70 flood cleanup kits to those affected by the flooding. About 100 homes incurred damage from the flooding. A shelter opened to help those who needed it, and Lyons said about 630 meals were served during April to those residents. And all that work has strained the Salvation Army's resources here in west-central Mississippi.

Hard hit FL counties await disaster declaration (FL Times Union, 5/15)

With hurricane season approaching, Glynn County officials had worked on a debris management plan just in case. Finished just a week ago, it was put into play quicker than anyone wanted. Public works officials are using parts of it this week to clean up trees felled by a tornado that struck the island Sunday afternoon, county spokeswoman Candice Temple said. For the time being, the county is heaping saw timber, limbs and roots at a staging area east of the St. Simons Island airport and asking homeowners to pile debris on the public right-of-way until it can be moved. The pile at the airport already is more than two stories high and one worker predicted it would double by the weekend. The plan, however, calls for all of it to be picked up by a contractor for disposal. FEMA officials have visited both Glynn and McIntosh counties, where a Sunday morning tornado did far more damage, but have not yet released the agency's estimate of the damage, said Temple and Ray Parker, McIntosh County's emergency management director. Both counties are waiting to see if President Bush includes them in a disaster declaration that would qualify them for federal funding. Gov. Sonny Perdue put both in a list of 13 counties where he declared an emergency. The morning tornado leveled the Gateway Behavioral Services Center, McIntosh County's emergency services building and Outboard Rejuvenation, a business that repairs and sells boats. The county was clearing away its rubble Wednesday, but Gateway and the owners of Outboard Rejuvenation were waiting word from their insurance companies, Parker said.

Oklahoma town unlikely to recover from tornado (Associated Press, 5/14)

State and federal officials toured this tornado-ravaged town and essentially hammered the final nail into its coffin. Any financial aid sent to the 800-person community, they said, will only help people relocate, not rebuild in the same area where a government buyout of

homes is already under way. "Rebuilding here is not going to be a real option," Gov. Brad Henry said Tuesday. The storm will likely hasten, rather than delay, the buyout process, he said. Saturday's tornado leveled 114 homes and was responsible for seven deaths in Picher, a fading lead and zinc mining town in far northeastern Oklahoma. The severe weather killed another 20 people in the Plains and the Southeast. "It really is like a small nuclear bomb went off," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said after touring the area. He was joined by the governor and David Paulison, FEMA administrator. The tornado struck the heart of a federal Superfund site, an area beset with mine collapses, open shafts, acid water and mountains of lead-contaminated waste. The government has been buying out residents' homes. The EPA is testing the air to see if it became tainted with lead when the tornado scattered mine waste. Agency spokeswoman Tressa Tillman said Wednesday that preliminary tests showed that particulate levels weren't high enough to raise health concerns. There also are concerns that the tornado contaminated soil in the 800-person town, which was once a thriving hub of 20,000 people in Ottawa County. Prolonged exposure to lead can damage nervous systems, particularly in young children.

President Declares Major Disaster For Oklahoma (FEMA, 5/14)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Oklahoma to help people and communities recover from the effects of severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on May 10, 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 Ottawa County. 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 Justin A. Dombrowski as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Dombrowski said that additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

FL Counties are in disaster declaration as cleanup unfolds (FL Times Union, 5/14)

A Mother's Day tornado that tore a 5-mile path across McIntosh County caused about \$10 million damage to homes and public buildings, county officials estimated Tuesday. "That's our assessment, but it could be \$5 million either way," said Ray Parker, director of the county's Emergency Management Agency, noting they were awaiting the results of a federal damage assessment. Glynn County officials were still waiting for FEMA officials who were expected late Tuesday to survey areas of St. Simons Island and the mainland struck about 3 p.m. Sunday by a tornado, said Candice Temple, the county's information officer. The NWS classified the tornado that struck St. Simons as an F1 with winds 85 to 90 mph, Temple said. In McIntosh County on Tuesday, chainsaws buzzed through downed trees as residents and county workers picked through the debris to salvage what they could and clean up the wreckage. Parker said the county is seeking a

state permit to set up a burn pit to dispose of the fallen trees. Other debris will be taken to a landfill, and what isn't allowed there will go to a scrap yard, he said. Glynn County Commissioner Uli Keller said about 70 loads of debris already had been moved on St. Simons, part of it going to a contractor for disposal and some stockpiled near the island's airport for later disposal.

Evacuations in progress in coastal Delaware (AP, 5/12)

Delaware officials say evacuations are in progress in flooded coastal communities. Allen Metheny, assistant director of emergency management in Kent County, says rescuers are evacuating as many of the coastal communities as they can. High tides and heavy rains have flooded roads, requiring the assistance of the Delaware National Guard and the Delaware State Police in the evacuation operation. Metheny says the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is also providing assistance.

Survivors clean up after new round of storms :Tornadoes kill at least 22 (AP, 5/12)

Stunned survivors picked through the little that was left of their communities Sunday after tornadoes tore across the Plains and South, killing at least 22 people in three states and leaving behind a trail of destruction and stories of loss. At least 15 people died in southwestern Missouri. In the fading mining town of Picher, Okla., at least six people were killed, and at least one person died in storms in Georgia. Susan Roberts, 61, stared at the smashed remains of her classic 1985 Cadillac sitting on her living room floor - the only thing left of her Seneca home. A woman who had apparently sought shelter in the car died there, she said. "That is what is tearing me up," Roberts said. She had warned the woman - who stopped to change a tire as Roberts and her 13-year-old grandson drove away from the rental house - to escape. The tornado hit just minutes later. "I'm from Kansas. I grew up watching storms," she said as she walked through the debris. "If I didn't have my grandson with me, I probably wouldn't have left." The same storm system earlier hit Oklahoma, where at least six people died and 150 people were injured in Picher. The town, once a bustling mining center of 20,000 that dwindled to about 800 people as families fled lead pollution there, was a surreal scene of overturned cars, smashed homes and mattresses, and twisted metal high stuck in the canopy of trees.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

FEMA under fire for slow progress on new alert system (GovExec.Com, 5/14)

House lawmakers took aim at FEMA's effort to modernize the nation's emergency alert system, saying progress has been too slow and legislative action may be needed to pressure the agency to work faster. Lawmakers expressed frustration that FEMA has not moved quickly enough to develop the so-called Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, which eventually will allow alerts to be sent via e-mail, cell phones and hand-held devices. The House Homeland Security Emergency Communications Subcommittee held a hearing to examine IPAWS. In a separate action, two members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee introduced legislation that would establish standards and requirements that FEMA must meet for the new system. "Communities and

individuals need to know what steps to take in the event of a natural disaster or act of terrorism," Homeland Security Emergency Communications Subcommittee Chairman Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, said at the hearing. "I worry that progress has been slow in making this system a reality." Martha Rainville, FEMA's assistant administrator, said the first increment of the system will be rolled out to eight states and Puerto Rico this year. "We cannot do everything at once so later this year we are rolling out the first increment to support digital alerts," she said. "Later on, we will roll out additional increments to support risk-based alerts, non-English language alerts and alerts for special needs communities."

County Seeks More Shelters Fit For Pets (Tampa Tribune, 5/13)

As another hurricane season looms, Hillsborough County needs to do more to provide shelter for people and their pets, Commissioner Rose Ferlita told a group that works to improve disaster plans for agriculture interests and animals. The county has two hurricane shelters that accept pets, and that is not enough, Ferlita said. That's an increase from the one shelter in 2006 that accepted pets. "We need to do more than two shelters," she told the Community of Hillsborough Animal and Agricultural Response Team that met Monday. The nonprofit group's aim is to provide contacts and gather resources for the county's agricultural industry in case of a hurricane. The group also works with the county to refine the part of its disaster plan that deals with animals and pets. Surveys conducted after evacuations found some residents did not leave because they could not take their pets to shelters. The commission appointed Ferlita last week to form a committee to examine how the county's emergency plan complies with federal legislation requiring state and local emergency management agencies to incorporate provisions for pets in their hurricane plans. If the county doesn't comply with the legislation, Hillsborough may not be eligible for reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for expenses related to evacuations and sheltering people with their pets. Work needs to be done in that area, she said. The county has two shelters where residents forced to evacuate can bring their pets, but space is limited compared with the estimated 500,000 pets in Hillsborough, though not all are in evacuation zones. Those shelters need volunteers, too. The American Red Cross, which usually provides staffing, does not handle pets. To help, CHAART will have training sessions for volunteers June 7 at Sickles High School, one of two pet-friendly shelters, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

New Colorado resource center to help schools ensure safety (AP, 5/13)

Gov. Bill Ritter signed legislation on Tuesday creating a resource center to help avoid a repeat of deadly shootings at Columbine and Platte Canyon high schools. The Colorado School Safety Resource Center will help communities establish individual safety plans with help from experts in education, law enforcement, mental health and other fields. The center will start work with five pilot communities chosen in the first year. Ritter said no child, parent or teacher should have to endure the terror of the 1999 Columbine massacre or the 2006 shooting at Platte Canyon. Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, killed 12 students and a teacher and wounded 23 before killing themselves at Columbine in Littleton. Duane Morrison, 53, took six girls hostage at Platte Canyon in Bailey, sexually assaulting them before fatally shooting one girl and killing himself. "We owe our children the basic right of a safe school," Ritter said in a statement. Ritter signed one bill

creating the resource center in the Department of Public Safety and another requiring the center to create a school-mapping pilot program that would give first-responders access to electronic maps and other schematic information about schools. Sen. John Morse, D-Colorado Springs, said the center will provide "real world solutions and best practices from safe schools around the country."

Hurricane season preparations begin (S. Florida Sun Sentinel, 5/12)

When more than 2,500 emergency managers, rescue workers and government officials descend on Fort Lauderdale this week, they won't be spending much time at the beach. Instead, they'll be bracing for hurricane season and trying to instill a renewed sense of urgency for public preparedness -- after two quiet years in 2006 and 2007 in this state. "We know at some point Florida will be impacted again by a hurricane, and the only way we can mitigate that impact is through planning and preparing," said Tony Carper, president of the Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference. Officials from 59 Florida counties, 30 coastal states and four Caribbean nations plan to attend the five-day conference, which starts today in the Broward Convention Center. Gov. Charlie Crist is the scheduled keynote speaker for the main session Wednesday. Other notable speakers: Craig Fugate, state emergency management director; Bill Read, director of the National Hurricane Center; and climatologist William Gray of Colorado State University. The theme of this year's conference: "Maintaining the Vigil While Preparing for the Inevitable." That, emergency managers say, is a diplomatic way of saying they fear Florida's two-year break from hurricane damage could be over. The problem, they add, is residents might not feel a need to gear up, even though long-range predictions call for a busier than normal season, which officially will start June 1 and end Nov. 30. Carper, Indian River County's emergency management director and formerly Broward's director, said Florida was lucky that two Category 5 hurricanes, Dean and Felix, roared across the Caribbean last year -- rather than turn in this direction.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

FEMA trailer count down 81 percent in Louisiana (New Orleans Citybusiness, 5/12)

The number of government-supplied trailers and mobile homes in Louisiana has fallen 81 percent from a peak of 88,523 after the 2005 hurricanes to 16,858 units as of today, FEMA said. The figures do not include industrial sites, which are those that opened on the sites of businesses. FEMA spokeswoman Gina Cortez said all industrial sites in Louisiana have closed. Statewide, there are 541 units in group sites, which are those built by FEMA on open lots, fields and playgrounds; 14,427 in front of damaged homes; and 1,890 on commercial sites, which are pre-existing mobile homes or trailer parks that FEMA leases. FEMA trailer and mobile home figures by parish in the New Orleans area:

- Orleans: 5,403 units, down 76 percent from 22,712;
- St. Bernard: 2,032 units, down 77 percent from 8,769;
- St. Tammany: 2,083 units, down 81 percent from 10,937;
- Jefferson: 932 units, down 95 percent from 18,478; and
- Plaquemines: 1,459 units, 67 percent from 4,454 units