

## **Disaster News Update –May 19 to 25, 2008**

### **RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)**

- **Drought:** Oregon, California, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina
- **Explosion:** California (Construction site)
- **Fire:** Washington, California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Georgia, Florida
- **Flood/Flash Flood:** Oregon (warning), Colorado (warning), Idaho, Louisiana, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota (warning)
- **Hail:** Georgia, Minnesota
- **HazMat:** Arkansas (factory fire)
- **Heavy Rain:** Louisiana, Maryland, Kansas, Minnesota, California
- **Mudslide:** California
- **Sinkhole:** Virginia
- **Strong Wind:** Georgia, California, Iowa, Texas, Georgia
- **Tornado:** Colorado, Kansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Iowa, Minnesota, Texas
- **Transportation:** Pennsylvania (Bus Accident), Wisconsin (School Bus Accident)

### **CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)**

- [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)
- [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 \(4/21\)](#)

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Red Cross chief touts readiness** (Republican (MA), 5/21)

The incoming CEO of the American Red Cross told an audience yesterday that the agency should be lauded for the daily aid it provides in local neighborhoods as much as for its international relief efforts in disaster hot spots across the globe. Gail J. McGovern, the charity's new president and CEO, visited the Pioneer Valley chapter and addressed local officials and community leaders. The former AT&T executive and Harvard professor is scheduled to assume the role in June, but is visiting a handful of local sites

beforehand. "In my view we are at a pivotal point in the long history of the Red Cross," said Sanford A. Belden, a Hatfield resident and member of the American Red Cross board of governors. "I couldn't imagine a greater leader to shepherd us through." McGovern was hired to replace Mark Everson, the former CEO who was forced to resign last year amid revelations he had a "personal relationship" with a subordinate employee. A former commissioner of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Everson was hired to help repair and restructure the charity after it was criticized for its response to Hurricane Katrina. In addition to lauding the local agency and the national agency for its everyday efforts on behalf of fire victims and the like, McGovern yesterday headed off questions about resources the Red Cross has earmarked as hurricane season approaches. "We have 5 million meals stockpiled. We are prepared to serve 1 million hot meals per day," McGovern said. "We will be able to shelter 500,000 disaster victims this hurricane season." She told local board members and corporate leaders that the public does not completely grasp the unrelenting relief the Red Cross provides in cities and towns across the country, as well as in disaster-torn countries such as China and Myanmar.

**Hands On Disaster Response Coordinating MO Relief Efforts** (PR Newswire, 5/21)  
Hands On Disaster Response (HODR) is a micro-deployment with Project Newton County. This volunteer project began May 19th and will last 30 days to help the devastated area of Newton County, Missouri. This county was the primary area in the state hit by tornados that struck on May 10th. Tornado damage in Missouri is severe with 460 homes affected 200 of which are either completely destroyed or suffered major damage. HODR's assessment team spent time evaluating the damage and overall response in Missouri before choosing Newton County as a home for the next four weeks. The strong winds, measuring up to F4 strength, spanned the entire 30-mile length of the county also took the lives of 18 residents. With the partnership of AmeriCorps, St. Louis, HODR will be able to coordinate projects including: staffing a support center, community needs assessment, tree and debris cleanup, home demolition, fence repair and possibly roofing and basic home repair. As always, HODR welcomes volunteers and will do their best to put skills and talents to work in the community. The volunteers only need to get transportation to the volunteer base. In exchange for volunteer time and resources, HODR provides food, shelter, and a dynamic, rewarding work experience. HODR is also accepting monetary donations to help offset the costs of this project.

**'Compassion in Action' Highlights NGO Disaster Role** (Christian Newswire, 5/19)  
The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), joined by DHS Secretary Chertoff, convened a Compassion in Action policy roundtable entitled, "Partnerships in Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery: The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Building Resilient Communities." The Roundtable underscored the critical and increasing role of faith-based and community organizations in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The event highlighted ways public-private partnerships are boosting the quality of aid delivered to individuals and communities in the wake of disaster. Effective disaster preparation, response and recovery are increasingly defined by cross-sector collaboration that draws upon the complementary strengths of public, private and nonprofit sector players. Faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs), in particular, add much to these partnerships through

their established role in the community, existing infrastructure, unique ability to mobilize resources and human capital, and other capabilities complementary to those of government. As disaster recovery models transition from government-centered delivery of services to innovative community-based partnerships, the role of FBCOs remains vital to ensuring that communities are equipped to respond effectively to both the short- and long-term impact of disasters. The conference's dialogue on the critical role of America's nonprofit sector will be further explored at a White House Conference on Disaster Relief and Preparedness on May 29 and 30, in New Orleans.

## **COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS**

### **Missouri Recognizes National EMS Week** (Government Technology, 5/20)

Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) today recognized Missouri's dedicated emergency medical services personnel as part of National Emergency Medical Services Week, May 18-24. Gov. Matt Blunt issued a proclamation designating EMS Week, which is being celebrated throughout Missouri to honor these Missourians who serve their communities with day-to-day lifesaving services. "Our emergency medical personnel are an essential part of every Missouri community, small and large," Gov. Blunt said. "These emergency responders provide vital 24-hour lifesaving care to those in need, and we honor their heroic work and dedication to the citizens of Missouri." Missouri is served by 18,000 EMTs and paramedics across the state, many of whom are volunteers. The state is also supported by 215 ground ambulance and 15 air ambulance services. From rural farmlands to inner cities, EMS personnel serve those in need. Often the first to respond to an emergency, the EMS community is called upon not just to transport a patient but provide rapid lifesaving medical care and patient support. "Whether it's responding to the recent devastating storms in Southwest Missouri, a motor vehicle accident, fire or other emergency, EMS professionals are the first to lend a hand," DHSS Director Jane Drummond said. "A 911 call comes in and they hit the road to care for strangers in need, regardless of the situation. This is why DHSS has made EMS services and personnel a priority."

## **RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

### **Flooding Feared Across Plains** (Disaster News Network, 5/25)

Heavy rains across the Great Plains this week have sparked fears of major flooding from Wyoming to the Dakotas. In the small town of Kaycee in Johnson County, Wyoming, residents piled sandbags along the Middle Fork of the Powder River. The sandbags held Friday but more heavy rain was predicted this weekend. The last major flood to hit the community of 250 residents was in 2002 when more than 80 percent of the town was damaged when heavy rains forced the river from its banks. Friday night emergency officials closed all highway underpasses and warned residents to be prepared to leave their homes in Grand Island, NE. Significant flooding was reported across the southern part of Cozad damaging homes and businesses. And near Rapid City, SD, residents were preparing for the possibility of major flooding along Black Hills streams.

**Twisters Sweep Midwestern States** (CNN, 5/25)

Tornadoes swept through the Midwest on Sunday, killing seven people in Iowa and a toddler in Minnesota. A tornado touched down in the north-central Iowa town of Parkersburg at about 6 p.m., killing five before moving 10 miles east to New Hartford, where two others died in the storm, said Troy Price, a spokesman for Gov. Chet Culver. Spotters also reported a tornado near Dunkerton -- about 40 miles east of Parkersburg -- that they said caused considerable damage and flung debris as the storm moved at 23 miles per hour. Marble-sized hail fell over Waterloo, where authorities reported significant damage to homes, trees and power lines. "Early reports indicate that these communities have suffered severe and widespread damage, and I plan to visit the region very soon to offer my support to those affected," Culver said in a prepared statement. He declared disaster areas in three counties. Meanwhile, a Minnesota twister killed a 2-year-old child and seriously injured nine other people -- including another child -- in suburban Minneapolis-St. Paul. The tornado struck Hugo, about 25 miles north of the Twin Cities, destroying 50 homes and damaging another 150, city manager Mike Ericson told CNN. The National Weather Service confirmed the tornado in Hugo that touched down just after 5:30 p.m. (6:30 p.m. ET), and authorities reported twisters in nearby Coon Rapids and Blain. Video from the scene showed chairs, televisions, shingles and other debris tossed into the streets of the 11,500-population Hugo. Nickel-sized hail and larger pelted the suburb. Sgt. Rick Boone of the Coon Rapids Police Department said a twister cut through the middle of town, downing trees and causing minor damage to several homes. No fatalities or injuries were immediately reported.

**Wildfires Threaten Homes on Both Coasts** (Disaster News Network, 5/24)

Wildfires on both coasts destroyed and threatened homes and have prompted evacuation orders. In California, a fire in the Santa Cruz Mountains that has blackened more than 3,400 acres and destroyed at least a dozen homes was 20 percent contained Saturday as higher humidity and cooler weather was forecast. The Santa Cruz fire has prompted voluntary and mandatory evacuation orders for more than 1,400 homes. According to fire officials Saturday morning, at least 500 homes were being threatened by the blaze. The fire is continuing to burn through steep, wooded ravines and hillsides. In Florida, thick black smoke has choked off a number of highways including, on a few occasions, sections Interstate 95 -- the main north-south artery along the eastern part of the state. The sun has been obscured by the thick pall of smoke in Miami and other cities as firefighters fought wildfires in the Everglades. Already this year, fires have ravaged tens of thousands of acres of wilderness. Hundreds of homes have been damaged or destroyed by the blazes. "In May or June we sort of expect this," said Florida Division of Forestry Senior Forester Dale Armstrong. "This is one of those years that is exceptionally bad, but it's the natural way of things in Florida." On Mother's Day, intentionally-set fires ravaged thousands of acres in Palm Bay in southern Brevard County, destroying 30 homes and damaging more than a hundred others. A smaller series of fires a bit north near Cocoa damaged several hundreds of acres of land. A week later, fires flared up in about 21,000 acres of the Everglades, far from houses, but sending dark clouds of smoke over Miami and other areas across the whole south of the peninsula.

**Storms bring flooding to central Nebraska** (Associated Press, 5/24)

A storm system that already dumped 7 inches of rain on some parts of Nebraska and sparked devastating tornadoes in other Midwestern states threatened to bring more of same heading into Sunday. The National Weather Service extended several advisories for Nebraska through Saturday night, including a tornado watch for communities stretching between O'Neill and Beatrice to the east. "We're kind of stuck in a pattern right now," said meteorologist Scott Bryant in the weather service's Hastings office. He forecast more showers and thunderstorms for central Nebraska starting Saturday afternoon and continuing into Sunday. The storm system first brought rain, hail and strong winds to the region on Thursday, lingering ever since. The storms have already caused flooding across parts of Nebraska, and lightning strikes were blamed for a few fires. The weather service received reports Friday that a tornado near the Colorado-Nebraska line downed four power lines, snapped a fence and overturned a stock trailer. More devastating tornadoes were reported in Oklahoma, Kansas and elsewhere in Colorado. "It's been a rough couple of days across the area," Bryant said. He said most central Nebraska counties saw 3 to 5 inches of rain since the storms first rolled through Thursday. More was reported in Dawson and Gosper counties, with some communities getting 7 inches.

**Flood-ravaged Rushford (MN) in midst of rebuilding** (Associated Press, 5/24)

Spend even a few minutes in this southern Minnesota town and you'll hear the roar of construction equipment. Rushford was devastated by the floodwaters that swept across much of southeastern Minnesota last August; few homes or buildings in the town of about 1,700 people were spared. The damage was so widespread and the government paperwork required to rebuild was so daunting, that some locals wondered if their town could ever truly come back. But nine months later, the outlook is less grim. A recent report by the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund found that the vast majority of Rushford residents have decided to repair rather than desert their homes. In the first quarter of 2008, the city issued 227 flood-repair permits. That's compared to only 51 demolition permits, and 36 of those were for the Bluffview Trailer Park, which was totally swamped. "It's a positive sign. A lot of people are fixing up their homes," Rodney Darr, owner of Darr Auctions and Realty, told the Post-Bulletin of Rochester. Much of the actual rebuilding is being done by volunteers, like the Winona State University football team, which recently spent a week working in town. John Williams, whose family's mobile home was destroyed in the flood, is moving into a once-flooded home on Maple Street that's being renovated by volunteers. "There is no way I could get this done (without help)," Williams said. "It would take me two years." Even as the rebuilding proceeds, there are still plenty of challenges for this city. The nonprofit report found a major lack of rental housing in the wake of the flood, with all available units currently occupied. Mayor Les Ladewig said plans are in the works to rebuild some apartments damaged in the flood, but it's unclear how long that will take. In the meantime, many Rushford residents are renting out of the city until something is available in town.

**President Declares Major Disaster For Missouri** (FEMA, 5/23)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Missouri to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes during the period of May 10-11, 2008. FEMA Administrator David Paulison

said the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Barry, Jasper, and Newton counties. Paulison said that FEMA assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide. All counties in the state of Missouri are eligible to apply for assistance under Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Paulison named Michael L. Karl as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Karl said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the State and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

### **President Declares Major Disaster For Georgia**

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Georgia to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes during the period of May 11-12, 2008. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in the counties of Bibb, Carroll, Douglas, Emanuel, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Laurens, McIntosh, and Twiggs. Paulison said that FEMA assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster. Federal funding also 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 storms and tornadoes in the counties of Bibb, Carroll, Crawford, Emanuel, Glynn, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Laurens, McIntosh, Treutlen, Twiggs, and Wilkinson. In addition, federal funding is also available on a cost sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide. All counties in the State of Georgia are eligible to apply for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Paulison named Jeffery L. Bryant the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Bryant said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the State and warranted by the results of further damage assessments

### **Storms cause problems in south Louisiana** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 5/23)

The heavy rains that fell in south Louisiana Thursday flooded some homes and streets and interrupted college baseball tournaments. Emergency management officials reported to the National Weather Service flooding in five homes in Des Allemands in St. Charles Parish, and in 15 to 20 homes in Schriever, about 30 miles away, in Terrebonne Parish. Those reports were made in the afternoon. Streets flooded in parts of New Orleans in "the usual low-lying areas," said Jerry Sneed, the city's emergency preparedness director. "It's been a deluge of water in a short period of time, and it puddles up," he said, adding that pumping stations were beginning to clear many of the affected areas by early evening, as the rainfall began to let up.

### **Tornadoes rip through Colorado, Kansas; 1 killed** (Associated Press, 5/23)

A large tornado skipped through several northern Colorado towns on Thursday, destroying dozens of homes, flipping tractor-trailers and freight rail cars, and killing at

least one person. The National Weather Service said the tornado touched down just before noon near Platteville, about 50 miles north of Denver. Over the next hour, it moved northward past several towns along 35-mile-long track toward Wyoming. In Windsor, Colo., a farming town of 16,000 that was hardest hit, dazed residents retrieved what they could from their homes. Nine people were hospitalized with various injuries at the Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland, said spokesman Alex Stuessie. In Greeley, four people were treated for minor injuries at North Colorado Medical Center, said administrative representative Laurie Hamit. Several minor tornadoes were reported in northern Colorado on Thursday, the National Weather Service said. Meteorologist Jim Kalina said two or three major storm cells affected the area and that the weather service was trying to confirm how many tornados touched down.

**President Declares Major Disaster For South Dakota** (FEMA, 5/22)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for South Dakota to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storm and record and near record snow during the period of May 1-2, 2008. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said 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 and record and near record snow in the counties of Bennett, Butte, Harding, Jackson and Perkins. In addition, assistance for snow removal and emergency protective measures that were undertaken to save lives and protect public health, safety and property over a continuous 48- hour period in response to record and near record snow is available to the State and eligible local governments in the counties of Butte, Harding and Lawrence. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide and tribal. All counties in the State of South Dakota are eligible to apply for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Paulison named Tony Russell the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Russell said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

**Groups, Individuals Pitch In To Help Fire Victims** (Mountain View Telegraph, 5/22)

Aid from various agencies and individuals has been making its way to the victims of the Trigo Fire. As a result of the fire in the Manzano Mountains that began April 15 and burned 59 homes in the communities of Sherwood Forest and New Canyon, the U.S. Small Business Administration declared Torrance County and some surrounding counties a disaster, said Janan "Ben" Raju, in the office of disaster assistance. The SBA opened a Disaster Loan Outreach Center at the Estancia Town Hall on Tuesday to issue low-interest disaster loan applications and help individuals complete applications. Loans will be available to homeowners and renters, as well as businesses, nonprofits and churches, Raju said. The center will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, but will be closed on Memorial Day. County Emergency Manager John Cordova said FEMA will not likely help those whose homes were destroyed because less than 25 percent were primary residences, with the rest most likely being vacation homes. Cordova said he intended to work on implementing a reverse 911 community alert

system to notify residents of evacuations. But even without one, he said that agencies worked together well.

**10 AR counties now disaster areas** (AR Democrat Gazette, 5/21)

Individuals in 10 Arkansas counties where May 2 storms killed seven and damaged hundreds of homes and businesses can apply for federal aid after President Bush on Tuesday declared those counties major disaster areas. The counties are Benton, Cleburne, Conway, Crittenden, Grant, Lonoke, Mississippi, Pulaski, Saline and Van Buren. Individuals can apply for grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans for property loss and to other programs to help rebuild. Aid is for damages not covered by insurance. Federal funding is also available for state and local governments and nonprofit organizations to help repair roads and buildings and to pay for emergency work in Cleburne, Conway, Crittenden, Grant, Lonoke and Van Buren counties. It's available on a costsharing basis. The declaration comes two weeks after Gov. Mike Beebe made his initial request for federal aid for the communities devastated by the storms. The governor amended his request for aid on May 14 after adding more affected counties to the request.

**Storms damage homes, trap residents in Cherokee County** (AP, 5/21)

Authorities say severe storms have damaged dozens of buildings in north Georgia, and there are multiple reports of people trapped in their homes in Cherokee County. The storms late Tuesday afternoon came amid tornado warnings from the National Weather Service, but there was no official confirmation that a twister struck. There are no reports of injuries. Robby Westbrook, director of the county's office of emergency management, issued a statement saying many roads were blocked by fallen trees in an area south of Canton, about 30 miles north of Atlanta. A command post was set up at Johnson Elementary School and county officials requested fire-rescue aid from neighboring counties.

**President Declares Major Disaster Arkansas** (FEMA, 5/20)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Arkansas to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding and tornadoes beginning on May 2, 2008 and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in the counties of Benton, Cleburne, Conway, Crittenden, Grant, Lonoke, Mississippi, Pulaski, Saline and Van Buren Counties. Paulison said that FEMA assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster. Federal funding is also 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 storms, flooding, and tornadoes in the counties of Cleburne, Conway, Crittenden, Grant, Lonoke, and Van Buren. All counties in the State of Arkansas are eligible to apply for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Paulison named Kenneth M. Riley as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in

the affected area. FEMA said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the State and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

**Pittsburgh to seek federal aid to help with landslides** (Associated Press, 5/19)

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl says he will seek federal assistance to deal with dozens of landslides in several neighborhoods. Ravenstahl says he wants money from FEMA to buy homes or help owners mitigate the problems. The city has identified 46 landslides that are threatening to bring down property values, ruin homes and crumble streets in 29 neighborhoods. The city estimates it would cost at least \$7.4 million to fix 24 of the landslides involving public land. There are no estimates for the remaining 22 or for landslides on private land. The 2008 budget has earmarked \$200,000 for landslide repairs.

**Illinois pressing latest effort to get federal disaster help** (Associated Press, 5/19)

The state of Illinois is making a new push to get federal disaster help for victims of March's flooding in the southern part of the state. FEMA last month turned down the state's request for loans and grants for people and businesses affected by the floods in 15 counties. This week, state and federal officials are assessing previously unreported or inaccessible damage to see if it would support an appeal of FEMA's decision. The counties covered in the request were: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White and Williamson. Initial assessments showed that 39 homes were destroyed, 150 homes sustained major damage and 374 homes had lesser damage. Some 145 businesses also were damaged by flood waters.

**President Declares Major Disaster for Kentucky** (FEMA, 5/19)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Kentucky to supplement commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, mudslides, and landslides during the period of April 3-4, 2008. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said federal funding is available to the commonwealth 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 severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, mudslides, and landslides in Anderson, Crittenden, Fleming, Fulton, Hancock, Hopkins, Lewis, Livingston, McLean, Nicholas, Ohio, Spencer, and Woodford counties. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures all counties in the commonwealth. Paulison named W. Michael Moore the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Moore said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the commonwealth and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

**PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

**Gulf Coast preps for pet shelters during hurricane** (Associated Press, 5/23)

Officials making hurricane preparations along the Gulf Coast say they are trying to make

sure pets and other animals have shelter during a storm. Officials at the Alabama/Mississippi hurricane conference said they had organized networks of shelters and veterinarians, and that they are more prepared than when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. The disaster taught them to expect thousands of storm evacuees with pets everything from gerbils to potbellied pigs they refused to abandon. Many evacuees then had no idea where to shelter their pets. In Alabama, officials were working on creating a network that includes a "disaster veterinarian" in each of the state's 67 counties. Mississippi has planned to handle about 1,200 evacuated animals of all sizes and can open agriculture centers with large barns to shelter horses and cattle. Louisiana is testing refrigerated trucks to haul animals. Hurricane Katrina, which devastated Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Alabama, killed countless animals and brought new state and federal laws to protect them during a storm, said Dr. Brigid Elchos, Mississippi's public health veterinarian. "We're much farther along in prepared efforts to care for people with animals in a better place than we were during Katrina," she said by phone. At the conference in Mobile, veterinarian Brad Fields said there will be major shelters open in Dothan, Montgomery and Birmingham. Kay Carter-Corker, an animal care expert with the USDA in Raleigh, N.C., told the conference that refrigerated trucks will be tested next month in Baton Rouge, La., for potential use as animal transports during a disaster.

#### **President Declares National Hurricane Preparedness Week** (5/23)

Excerpt from the proclamation: "National Hurricane Preparedness Week highlights the vital importance of being prepared when natural disasters strike. Tropical storms can cause destruction over entire regions and claim the lives of many of our citizens. We can help reduce vulnerability in our communities by encouraging all citizens to be prepared and to work together. Maintaining emergency supply kits and family communication plans, and knowing what to do in an emergency can help save lives. For more information on hurricane preparedness, Americans can visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) and [fema.gov](http://fema.gov) to find checklists and other valuable resources to help them get prepared. My Administration continues to support efforts to strengthen how Americans prepare for and respond to disasters. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration works to predict and track storms so that citizens are more aware of potential storms. The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has improved communication between Federal, State, local government, and the private sector in order to help citizens stay informed and receive the help they need. By working together, we can better prepare for, respond to, and recover from hurricanes and reduce the harm to our citizens and our communities. As hurricane season approaches, we also express our gratitude to the volunteers and first responders who help their fellow citizens in their time of need. "

#### **Federal forecasters predict 6 to 9 hurricanes** (Chattanooga Times Free Press, 5/23)

Top federal weather forecasters on Thursday told Floridians to brace for an active Atlantic hurricane season. Their prediction calls for considerable activity -- 12 to 16 named storms are likely, including six to nine hurricanes, as many as five of which could be intensely powerful. An average season has 11 named storms, including six hurricanes, two of which reach major status. "It may very well be a busy season," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration. "Everyone needs to have a plan and be ready if a hurricane warning is issued. It only takes one hurricane to make it a bad season." Gerry Bell, the lead Atlantic hurricane forecaster for NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, warned that his outlook should serve as a general guide and does not indicate when and where a hurricane might strike. Bell's research found there is a 65 percent probability of above-average activity for the six-month hurricane season that begins June 1. Other probabilities: 25 percent for a near-normal season and 10 percent for below-normal activity. Bell and others announced their outlook at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla., backed by hurricane hunter aircraft that fly into storms and record data. The science behind the outlook is based on the analysis and prediction of current and future global climate patterns as compared to previous seasons with similar conditions. Last year, there were 15 named storms and six hurricanes, two of which were major. The government predicted 13 to 17 named storms, seven to 10 hurricanes and three to five major hurricanes. Bill Read, director of NOAA's National Hurricane Center in West Miami-Dade, said forecasters in his office are ready to track any storm and give residents the most up-to-date information to prepare. FEMA also took the opportunity at Thursday's announcement to remind residents now is the time to prepare for hurricane season. R. David Paulison of FEMA urged people to come up with a plan and gather the essential supplies needed to get through the days and weeks after a storm.

**Gulf Coast preps for pet shelters during hurricane** (Associated Press, 5/23)

Officials making hurricane preparations along the Gulf Coast say they are trying to make sure pets and other animals have shelter during a storm. Officials at the Alabama/Mississippi hurricane conference said they had organized networks of shelters and veterinarians, and that they are more prepared than when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. The disaster taught them to expect thousands of storm evacuees with pets everything from gerbils to potbellied pigs they refused to abandon. Many evacuees then had no idea where to shelter their pets. In Alabama, officials were working on creating a network that includes a "disaster veterinarian" in each of the state's 67 counties. Mississippi has planned to handle about 1,200 evacuated animals of all sizes and can open agriculture centers with large barns to shelter horses and cattle. Louisiana is testing refrigerated trucks to haul animals. Hurricane Katrina, which devastated Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Alabama, killed countless animals and brought new state and federal laws to protect them during a storm, said Dr. Brigid Elchos, Mississippi's public health veterinarian. "We're much farther along in prepared efforts to care for people with animals in a better place than we were during Katrina," she said by phone. At the conference in Mobile, veterinarian Brad Fields said there will be major shelters open in Dothan, Montgomery and Birmingham. Kay Carter-Corker, an animal care expert with the USDA in Raleigh, N.C., told the conference that refrigerated trucks will be tested next month in Baton Rouge, La., for potential use as animal transports during a disaster.

**Earthquake Scenario Unveiled for Southern California** (Dept. of Interior, 5/22)

Scientists unveiled a hypothetical Scenario describing how a magnitude 7.8 Southern California earthquake similar to the recent earthquake in China would impact the region, causing loss of lives and massive damage to infrastructure, including critical transportation, power, and water systems. In the Scenario, the earthquake would kill 1800

people, injure 50,000, cause \$200 billion in damage, and have long-lasting social and economic consequences. This is the most comprehensive analysis ever of what a major Southern California earthquake would mean, and is the scientific framework for what will be the largest earthquake preparedness drill in California history, scheduled for November 13, 2008. The November preparedness exercise, Golden Guardian 08, will test the ability of emergency responders to deal with the impact of a magnitude 7.8 earthquake on the San Andreas Fault in Southern California, and is being jointly organized by the Governors Office of Emergency Services and the California Office of Homeland Security. The Golden Guardian exercise will occur during a week-long series of public events planned for the Great Southern California ShakeOut. A June 4th kick-off event is planned for the ShakeOut to help communities plan to respond to the risks highlighted in the Scenario. The scientific report describing the ShakeOut Scenario, jointly published by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the California Geological Survey (CGS), will be released today during a Congressional hearing in Washington, D.C. The House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, led by Chairman Jim Costa (D-CA), will hold an oversight hearing on USGS efforts to prepare for future earthquakes, at 10:00 a.m. EDT in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building.

**North Carolina plans for monster storms** (NC News and Observer, 5/22)

Recognizing that the best way to stop a hurricane from killing people is to get them out of the way, the state is working on an evacuation plan that could get tens of thousands of residents and visitors out of 20 coastal counties before a Category 4 or 5 storm comes ashore. Rather than leave each county to design its own evacuation plan and hope each has the resources to carry it out, the state would help the counties coordinate, said Bryan Beatty, secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety. Beatty spoke Wednesday at a media briefing during a two-day hurricane preparedness exercise that has emergency workers from across the state dealing with a pair of mock storms that bring flooding to the mountains and Category 4 winds to the coast. In the event of a storm of such magnitude, Beatty said, coastal counties would be able to move residents and vacationers quickly inland using school and prison buses. In addition, he said, the state has secured federal homeland security money to help pay for bus ambulances, capable of carrying 20 people at a time from hospitals and nursing homes. Still, Beatty said, for people whose conditions make them too fragile to travel, preparations will be made to help them "shelter in place." Beatty said the thousands of residents stranded in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina taught coastal states that a plan for orderly, mass evacuation will save lives.

**FEMA Ice During Storms Going Only to Sick, Needy** (Palm Beach Post, 5/20)

After Hurricane Wilma swept across the state in October 2005, the South Florida Fairgrounds became a regional distribution center for, among other necessities, 26 million pounds of ice. Not this year. "It's not a lifesaving commodity for most people," FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison told the National Hurricane Conference last month in Orlando. "For those that it is, we will provide it. We're not going to be handing out bags of ice on the street." Hospitals, nursing homes and special needs shelters would be served, Paulison said, but the able-bodied are on their own this season. The decision

may be a result of the Hurricane Katrina debacle, in which FEMA paid \$12.5 million to store unused ice and another \$3.4 million to melt it. But the change has left county and city authorities seeking clarifications and emphasizing personal preparedness. "We still have calls into them," said Matt Cronin, a manager with Palm Beach County Emergency Management. "Our question is whether we'll be reimbursed if we make the decision to buy ice. We haven't heard." In West Palm Beach, residents will be reminded of the change with notices in their monthly utility bills beginning June 1, as well as on CityConnect, a bimonthly online newsletter. "The main thing is the same message we've been sending for the past couple of years," city spokesman Peter Robbins said Monday. "Be self-reliant. We'll do everything we can to get back to normal as soon as possible, but people need to have their own supplies."

## **GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

### **New Orleans Recovery Effort is Uneven** (MSNBC, 5/21)

The last two Atlantic hurricane seasons passed with barely a stir in south Louisiana, sparing New Orleans another disaster. But some local officials fear the respite may have contributed to a false sense of safety in parts of the city that still face great danger. Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans and killed 1,500 people on the U.S. Gulf of Mexico Coast in August 2005, but no other hurricanes have struck the city since. The government is shoring up levees and floodwalls, but completion of some of that work is years away and local officials say little has been done to protect the Mississippi River delta from a tidal surge like the one that devastated Myanmar this month. Post-Katrina New Orleans remains two separate communities as another hurricane season begins on June 1. One sustained heavy damage during the flood that followed Katrina and still bears the storm's scars. The other, which includes the historic French Quarter, shows few signs of a brush with Katrina, which was a Category 3 storm on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale of hurricane intensity.

### **Gulf Coast officials refine hurricane response** (AP, 5/21)

With no Gulf Coast hurricane since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Alabama and Mississippi officials have worried that residents and tourists could become complacent about the seriousness of orders to flee the next disaster that strikes Gulf shores. Officials have used the time since Hurricane Katrina to improve storm response tactics, but they are concerned that evacuation orders might not be heeded in time to escape harm. Recent high gasoline prices added a new planning problem for officials who gathered at Wednesday's storm preparedness conference. Alabama Gov. Bob Riley said the high gas prices will be a "critical component" for some people making decisions of whether to leave an area in the path of a hurricane. During a hurricane threat, some residents also hoard gasoline to beat prices and stash it for use in generators during power failures. Riley added that tourists on Gulf beaches also must not wait until the last hour to leave just to keep a hotel room. Riley said hurricane forecasts have become so sophisticated that people watching them believe they can continue vacations until a storm nears landfall before fleeing. Riley said the tourists and coast residents must be persuaded to leave a day or two before an actual evacuation order is issued. Officials are prepared to

reverse lanes on Interstate 65, leading all traffic north to Montgomery. Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Mike Womack said he doesn't think anyone who lived through Hurricane Katrina will delay leaving, even if gasoline prices continue to soar and they face bumper-to-bumper traffic in a mass exodus. Both states have fleets of buses prepared to assist with evacuations. Womack said Mississippi has an evacuation network that's in "very good shape." He said three new four-lane highways will lead away from the coast within the next year or so. Officials at the three-day conference spent several hours Wednesday morning going through a simulated Category 3 (130 mph) hurricane scenario. After the drill, Riley declared his state "more prepared than ever" to handle a hurricane "based on years of experience."