

Disaster News Update –May 26 to June 8, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 14 days)

- **Drought:** California, Oregon, Nevada, Wyoming, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida
- **Explosion:** New York (Propane Truck)
- **Extreme Heat:** Ohio, Massachusetts, Maryland, Washington, DC, Virginia
- **Fire:** North Carolina, Oklahoma, California, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia
- **Flood/Flash Flood:** Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, West Virginia, Nebraska, Illinois, Wisconsin
- **Hail:** Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa
- **HazMat:** Florida (acid spill)
- **Heavy Rain:** Iowa, West Virginia, Nebraska, Illinois, Alabama, Oklahoma
- **Mudslide:** West Virginia, Nevada, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Kentucky
- **Sinkhole:** North Carolina, Florida, Indiana, California, West Virginia, Ohio
- **Strong Wind:** Illinois, Indiana, Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Texas, Alabama, Oklahoma
- **Structural Failure:** New York (Crane Collapse)
- **Tornado:** Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Indiana, Kansas, Virginia, Wisconsin, Illinois, Oklahoma
- **Transportation:** Mississippi (Train Accident)

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Nebraska](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/30)
- [Mississippi](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/28)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/27)
- [Colorado](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/26)
- [Georgia](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/23)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (5/23)
- [South Dakota](#): Severe Winter Storm and Record and Near Record Snow (5/22)
- [Arkansas](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, and Tornadoes (5/20)
- [Kentucky](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Flooding, Mudslides, and Landslides (5/19)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/14)
- [Maine](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/9)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/9)
- [Mississippi](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/8)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (5/5)
- Fire Declarations: [Oklahoma \(6/5\)](#), [Texas \(6/5\)](#), [Texas \(6/3\)](#), [California \(5/22\)](#), [Florida \(5/12\)](#), [Texas \(5/1\)](#), [California, \(4/27\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Katrina volunteers slow to trickle (Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 6/1)

Melissa Spynda loves the beach, but when she recently sat in the Gulf Coast sands of Waveland, Miss., she wanted to be somewhere else. Worn out from a hurricane recovery job through AmeriCorps, a national service group, and working in a community still ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, the 23-year-old Plum resident needed a break. But on her walk home from the beach, she was rejuvenated simply by unloading a moving truck for strangers. But recovery workers like Spynda are in short supply on the Gulf Coast, still recovering from the 2005 hurricane, city officials said. With hurricane season starting today, Gulf Coast communities need a bigger labor force. Camp shelters in Waveland were filled with 350 youth volunteers around spring break, said Betty Patecek, city of Waveland volunteer recruiter and camp advisor. They are nearly empty now. Volunteer laborers will come again once school is out, community leaders said, but the response has dwindled as memories of the hurricane devastation fade. "Not only have they forgotten, but most have gone on with other things," Patecek said. "A lot of these groups are geared for first response. As people got into trailers, first responders weren't needed as much." Members of Habitat for Humanity at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh are planning a seven-day trip to do recovery work in New Orleans starting June 15. The club started as a way for students to volunteer in Louisiana, said club president Jenny Nieder. After watching numerous Hurricane Katrina documentaries and seeing the extensive damage, Nieder, 24 and a photography major, thought about starting the club. In Hancock County, where Waveland is located, about 11,000 homes were lost to the hurricane and another 5,400 were damaged. By the end of 2006, 88,000 Hancock County residents lived in 32,000 trailers distributed by FEMA, according to city of Waveland statistics. Waveland's City Hall remains in temporary buildings, and the city sewer pipes, power lines, gas lines and roads below the railroad tracks are being rebuilt, Patecek said. There were 1,242 building permits issued in Waveland during 2006, according to the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce. It's a community of 5,600 people.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Illinois Encourages Disaster Preparedness By Radio (Government Technology, 5/29)

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced the launch of a radio campaign designed to increase public awareness of the state's Ready Illinois Web site and encourage more people to be better prepared for disasters. The campaign, a partnership between the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) and the Illinois Broadcasters Association (IBA), features three radio spots that will air more than 11,000 times on 220 radio stations statewide over the next seven months. "We never know when disaster may strike, but we can take steps now to ensure we're ready to keep ourselves and our families safe whenever an emergency occurs," said Gov. Blagojevich. "The Ready Illinois Web site provides a wealth of information to help people before, during and after a disaster. This radio campaign will get the personal preparedness message out to millions of people throughout Illinois and remind them of this helpful preparedness resource." The radio campaign, which begins this week, is the first phase of a preparedness campaign that will also feature TV preparedness spots. The radio spots include two 30-second spots in English and one 30-second Spanish spot. The humorous spots highlight the importance of

having a family preparedness plan and home disaster kit, and direct listeners to the Ready Illinois Web site for more information.

Safety is rule No. 1 at Camp 9-1-1 (Kalamazoo Gazette, 5/28)

Imagine a young child or teenager being alone with a grandparent or some other person who suddenly falls ill or has some other medical emergency. A one-day summer camp for children aims to teach children what to do to get immediate help and other ways to keep themselves safe. The program is Camp 9-1-1, hosted by Life EMS Ambulance, and it will be offered in four separate sessions this year. Participants will not receive CPR certification, but they will get basic instruction in CPR and first aid and learn what rescuers and first responders do, said Kimberly Caton, Life EMS Ambulance community-relations manager for Kalamazoo. The goal is that they come away with an increased awareness of safety and prevention, she said. "Basically, we are teaching prevention is the best bet," Caton said. "We want kids to be prepared for safety before (anything) happens." In addition to dealing with medical emergencies, the camp will teach children about home safety and fire safety; coping with bullying and peer pressure; and how to avoid abduction. The Safe Kids Coalition will provide bike-safety training, and Prevention Works will supply information about drug and smoking prevention. This year for the first time the Kalamazoo Valley Museum is hosting Camp 9-1-1 sessions. The others are in Oshtemo Township and Texas Township. The camp is very interactive, Caton said. Students can try out some of the equipment that emergency workers and firefighters use, learn introductory CPR techniques by practicing them on a dummy, and work on defensive moves to escape possible danger.

Nurse's efforts during snowstorm lead to full special-needs plan (Buffalo News, 5/27)

A Niagara County Health Department nurse's determination to help an elderly man during the October Surprise snowstorm of 2006 has led to a complete plan for aiding the county's special-needs population in an emergency. The County Legislature approved the plan last week, as James C. Volkosh, emergency management director and fire coordinator, told lawmakers the plan was hashed out in 18 months of meetings. The county already had a comprehensive plan for disaster evacuations, drawn up with Ecology & Environment of Lancaster. But its shortcomings, at least in regard to people with little mobility, became apparent in October 2006. Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton said supervising public health nurse Laurie Schoenfeldt visited an elderly patient in his Rapids home. Because the power was off, the sump pump wasn't working, and the man's basement was full of water, Rapids being a historically flood-prone area. Because of privacy laws, Stapleton couldn't discuss the man's health problems, but he said Schoenfeldt placed him in her car and even kept him in her home for a while, until he could be placed. "We couldn't put him in an emergency room because he wasn't sick. We couldn't take him to a nursing home because he wasn't acute," Volkosh said. Eventually, the man ended up going to a Red Cross shelter in Erie County. But the episode triggered a review of what was needed to deal with people who have access problems, need special medical appliances or have other issues that make them hard to move.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Dams, Levees Fail in Indiana Flooding (Disaster News Network, 6/8)

Coming just days after heavy rains and tornadoes ripped through Indiana, up to 10 inches of rain drenched the central part of the state Saturday, forcing hundreds from their homes and flooding interstates and highways. A dam at Prince's Lakes in Johnson County was overtopped and breached Saturday afternoon, and levee failures were reported in Vigo, Clay and Greene counties, according to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. More rain was possible overnight and the State Emergency Operations Center was to remain activated through the night to support flood response operations. The forecast called for some sunshine on Sunday. Kevin Cox with the Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (INVOAD) said conditions were so dangerous that state officials were asking volunteers to wait until roads and bridges were safer before beginning their relief efforts. "Most of our counties, the roads and bridges are being washed out," Cox said, adding that the Salvation Army also was providing shelter to storm victims. "We're asking volunteers to please not respond for a couple of days and stay tuned to the news. This will be one of the largest cleanups in state history." Some of the same regions and counties involved in widespread floods in January were again under water Saturday. "It was nonstop thunder, the wind and a downpour today," said Ann Gregson, resource development manager with the American Red Cross of Greater Indianapolis. "It's whole communities being evacuated. Main arteries are out." Gregson said the Red Cross was staffing 13 shelters across the state Saturday night. INVOAD officials said in a news release that emergency personnel were working late Saturday to restore power, assess damage to roads and bridges and make decisions regarding public safety on affected highways.

Damaging tornadoes injure at least 5 in Wisconsin (Associated Press, 6/8)

At least five people are injured after damaging tornadoes ripped through parts of Wisconsin. The powerful storms swept across central and southeastern Wisconsin on Saturday with baseball-size hail and high winds. Authorities say roofs were blown off homes and trees and power lines were toppled. Flash flooding was also reported in areas. Wisconsin emergency management spokeswoman Lori Getter says five people suffered minor injuries north of Madison.

Wildfire Damages Oklahoma Town (Disaster News Network, 6/8)

Winds up gusting up to 75 or 80 mph pounded Oklahoma Thursday evening, causing fires, power outages, and considerable property damage across the state. Windy conditions and lapping waves also contributed to the death of one man and critical injured another in an accident on Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City. Gusting winds contributed to fires across Oklahoma. One of the hardest hit was Gotebo, a town with 250 residents in southwest Oklahoma near the Texas border. The fire destroyed two houses and a barn. No one was seriously hurt.

Severe storms blow across west-central, northwest Ohio (Associated Press, 6/7)

Thousands were without power in stifling heat as thunderstorms with gusting winds blew across west-central and northwestern Ohio Friday night. Law enforcement officers

reported a tornado near Findlay shortly before 9:30 p.m. Friday, and the National Weather Service issued tornado warnings for portions of at least 11 Ohio counties throughout the evening. Trained weather spotters reported several funnel clouds and touchdowns in Van Wert County and a resident reported a possible tornado in Chattanooga near the Indiana border, the service said. Wind gusts in excess of 80 miles per hour were forecast roads were blocked by fallen trees and downed wires across many areas in the storms' path. Two firefighters in Continental were taken to a hospital for minor injuries when a tree or limb fell on the truck they rode in to respond to a call, said Putnam County emergency management director Steve Odenweller. The storms come at the end of a week when southwest Ohio had three confirmed tornadoes. Crews contended with stifling heat in that region Friday as they worked to get power back on. Forecasters say Thursday's heat in the 90s will be repeated for several days. Cincinnati declared a heat alert and opened cooling centers.

Victims' Needs Assessed in Colorado (Disaster News Network, 6/7)

More than 800 homes were damaged or destroyed when tornadoes swept through Windsor, Colorado on May 22. Pastor Dave Samples' church sustained roof and structural damage and some windows were blown out by the twister. The Windsor Community Church, a non-denominational congregation, was completely destroyed as was the Church of the Ancient Path, a Baptist congregation. Since Samples' congregation was able to keep the doors open, the Salvation Army operated a feeding unit in the parking lot. Cleanup teams from the Southern Baptist Convention and Mennonite Disaster Services have also helped to clean up yards and remove debris from farmers' fields. Only one death has been recorded, but the tornadoes caused an estimated \$150 million worth of damages. Pastor Linda Pelletier's First United Methodist Church in Windsor has been used as distribution center for goods donated by Wal-Mart, Ace Hardware and Manweiler Hardware, local store. A recent meeting was organized by FEMA and the Colorado Division of Emergency Management to set up a long term recovery effort. Michael Bright, the chairman of Colorado VOAD and the executive director of Adventist Community Services, based in Denver, said affected home and business owners will be allowed to seek federal assistance through FEMA after they find out how much insurance coverage they have. Bright said Weld County is fortunate to have a consortium of 200 churches that are attached to an email and fax system that allows the organizations to get the message out as soon as possible to warn church members of an impending disaster.

Storms Pound Country's Midsection (Disaster News Network, 6/7)

Adams County, IA withstood seven inches of rain during a 48-hour period from Wednesday, June 4 through Friday June 6. Water poured over the banks of the Nodaway River, but by Friday morning, the high water was in retreat. A Red Cross shelter was open here Thursday in this city of 1,783 people, which is the Adams County seat. But no one needed the assistance. Now, the cost damages need to be estimated, so officials from Adams County can seek state and federal assistance. It was another busy week in the nation's mid-section, in which storms raced west from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean. As of Saturday morning, more than 7,500 homes and residences were still without of power after violent thunderstorms pounded Washington D.C. Wednesday. In Chesapeake

Beach, on the bay's west shore, a tornado battered trees and homes with 85 mph winds. Another tornado was reported in the Fairfax County, VA. And there were reports of others in southern Maryland. In Kearney, NE, tornadoes pummeled this community May 29 causing millions of dollars worth of damage. There were no deaths and injuries and that's being credited to the city's early warning system, which sounded as a cell moved through the city. A line of storms made their Thursday through Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, spawning several tornadoes in Kansas. Nearly 50,000 homes and business were still without power Friday in Oklahoma due to high winds. On Wednesday, June 4, a tornado hit Moscow in central Indiana and destroyed a covered bridge. The top floor and the roof were also torn off of a old school house. And during a 24-hour period about five inches of rain fell on this area, about 35 miles southeast of Indianapolis.

WV Governor Expands State of Emergency (States News Service, 6/6)

The following information was released by the office of the governor of West Virginia: After touring flood-affected areas in central West Virginia and other parts of the state, and witnessing substantial damage, Gov. Joe Manchin has expanded the state of emergency declared June 4, 2008, to six additional counties and the surrounding regions. Those additional counties are Calhoun, Clay, Gilmer, Jefferson, Ritchie and Wirt, and the counties that surround them. The state of emergency still includes the counties named on June 4: Barbour, Doddridge, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Taylor and surrounding counties. Along with a representative from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Manchin on Thursday joined West Virginia Adj. Gen. Allen Tackett, Jimmy Gianato, director of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and James Spears, cabinet secretary of Military Affairs and Public Safety, for aerial and on-the-ground tours of flood-affected areas in Harrison, Marion and Gilmer counties. They visited with residents and county officials in hard-hit Boothsville, and toured a water-logged downtown Glenville. "We are doing everything humanly possible to get assistance to our citizens who've been hit by this flooding and its aftermath," Manchin said. "We want to minimize any suffering, so we've got the right people on the ground now, but we need your help to determine just how much damage we've suffered."

Tornado tears through swath of Minnesota (Associated Press, 6/6)

A strong storm packing at least one tornado raked a half-mile-wide path of destruction in northwestern Minnesota, ripping up roofs and trees and pushing cars off the road Friday, the National Weather Service said. Hubbard County emergency officials said there were no reports of any injuries in the storm, which caused widespread damage in Park Rapids and Emmaville. "Right now, I can tell you we've been fortunate," Sheriff Gary Mills said. Emmaville resident Drew Huntziger told KSTP-TV every tree in his yard was uprooted and his mobile home was damaged. His neighbor lost a big metal shed. KPRM-AM in Park Rapids reported that a turkey farm near Blueberry Lake was destroyed, a small housing development suffered minor damage and many trees were downed throughout the area. The weather service also reported damage in the small town of Menahga and Pickerel Lake.

IN Governor declares 41 counties disaster areas after storms (Associated Press, 6/6)

Gov. Mitch Daniels declared disaster in 41 counties Friday the first step to gaining

federal aid to help Indiana clean up from severe storms and tornados that recently racked the state. Daniels said residential properties were destroyed and damaged by tornados, severe winds, rain and flash flooding. Officials are still trying to finalize damage assessments. Once that is complete, the state will apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance, Daniels said. The state will likely seek individual aid so that residents could qualify for programs such as disaster housing, unemployment assistance, crisis counseling and loans, Daniels said. A storm and tornado on May 30 left more than 400 Indianapolis residents without a place to live and caused about \$29 million of damage in Marion County. Daniels wore a hardhat as he toured a tornado-ravaged apartment complex on the city's east side Friday. "No matter how many times I see it, I'm constantly amazed and awed by the human spirit and the spirit of compassion that characterizes our state," Daniels said. One person was killed and at least 10 injured in a second round of storms that moved through the state this week.

Heavy rain forces evacuations in Iowa (Associated Press, 6/6)

Flooding forced evacuations in the central Iowa town of Cambridge on Friday, while areas to the southwest saw some of their roads and buildings re-emerge from subsiding waters in a much-needed respite from severe weather. About a dozen homes were evacuated in low-lying areas of Cambridge due to runoff from heavy rains that began Thursday night and continued into Friday morning. Several inches of water had seeped into most basements and at least one foundation collapsed, said Lori Morrissey, Story County's emergency management coordinator. Emergency crews on Friday were busy pumping water from the homes, located on the town's south side where an estimated 4 feet of water had accumulated. "The ground is just fully saturated," Morrissey said. "The runoff from the community just all comes to that part of town. This is probably the worst it's ever been." The evacuations came after storms dumped more heavy rain across a state already reeling from severe weather earlier in the week. The rains tapered off Friday morning and gave emergency crews a chance to recover.

Floods cover state as Iowans brace for more storms (Associated Press, 6/6)

Floodwaters spread across Iowa on Thursday as the storm-ravaged state braced more another round of heavy rain that could last into the weekend. Parts of southwest Iowa have been the hardest hit, with some areas getting isolated tornado damage followed by heavy rain and hail. About 5-7 inches have fallen near the Nodaway River in Adams County since Wednesday night, causing widespread flooding as water poured over the river's banks on Thursday. Residents in Corning were seen paddling makeshift boats across town while some businesses were halfway under water. One man was seen pulling a cow from the waters with a rope. With the forecast calling for more storms into Friday, workers in several southern Iowa towns were busy sandbagging the area and setting up emergency shelters. "This will be a train effect," said Don Willett, emergency management coordinator for Adams County. "Storm after storm after storm is going to go over the same area." He said some families have already voluntarily evacuated their homes, and a mandatory evacuation could be issued sometime Thursday night or Friday if storms persist. The rest of the state is also at risk for flooding. Steve Teachout, a forecaster with the National Weather Service, said river levels across Iowa are high, and heavy rain could push the river waters into nearby towns.

FEMA And West Virginia Assess Storm Damage (FEMA, 6/6)

FEMA's regional office in Philadelphia has been working closely with the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (WVDHSEM) to monitor local damage assessments and needs resulting from the severe storms and flooding this week. At the conclusion of the state's initial assessment, WVDHSEM requested that FEMA provide federal support to conduct a Joint Federal-State Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) in Barbour, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, and Taylor counties. PDAs determine eligibility for a presidential disaster declaration, which triggers the release of federal disaster funds. "We have been in constant contact with our state counterparts and are ready to respond immediately," said Jonathan Sarubbi, FEMA Region III Regional Administrator. "A State Liaison Officer is currently working with the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to coordinate the upcoming joint assessments." PDA teams - comprised of representatives from county and local emergency management, the state, FEMA, and the SBA - will work together to gather damage information. The Public Assistance PDA teams will concentrate on assessing damage to public infrastructure, damage to roads and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and their contents, publicly owned utilities, and debris removal costs related to the disaster. The Individual Assistance PDA teams will evaluate damages to homes and businesses. The information FEMA collects will be used by the governor to determine if the extent of the damage is beyond the capability of the local and state government to recover from the disaster. The governor would then use this information to support the request for a Presidential declaration and to certify that the damage is beyond the state and local capabilities.

Three Counties Added To Ohio Snow Declaration (FEMA, 6/4)

Federal officials announced today that the counties of Licking, Madison and Marion have been added to the list of designated counties for the emergency declaration, following record or near-record snow on Mar. 7 - 9. "State officials provided additional information that FEMA staff carefully reviewed," said Mike Smith, FEMA's federal coordinating officer for this declaration. "Now, federal funds are available to help these counties recover some of the expenses incurred." The original 17 counties included in the April 24 emergency declaration are Ashtabula, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Crawford, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Geauga, Greene, Hardin, Huron, Lake, Morrow, Richland, Union, and Wyandot. Officials from the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) and FEMA will contact representatives of eligible local governments and non-profit organizations in Fayette, Highland, Licking, Madison, Marion, Pickaway, and Ross Counties next week to help them apply for federal disaster assistance.

Nebraska cleanup ongoing as floods recede (Omaha World Herald, 6/3)

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency reported Monday that cleanup continues in Platte Center and Schuyler. More than 250 homes and buildings in Schuyler were damaged, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services sent a team there Monday to test water quality in private wells. In Platte Center, several public buildings were damaged, including a community center, two city buildings and two local parks. Nearly 50 homes had some damage. "We're at a point now where our efforts are

transitioning from emergency response to cleanup and damage assessment," said Al Berndt, assistant director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. "The major concern this weekend was some lowland flooding over roads and ag lands, some of which reached homes and buildings." Berndt toured storm-damaged areas Monday with a FEMA coordinator to survey additional damage reported in the aftermath of last week's storms, which left tornado, wind and flood damage across a wide swath of the state. The aerial tour is expected to include damage in and around McCook, Lexington, Kearney, Columbus, Schuyler and Gage County. In Schuyler, the fire station turned into a central command post for dispatching volunteer crews to cleanup tasks. Red Cross officials set up a temporary shelter at a grade school and delivered food to different parts of the community. Heavy-duty construction rigs rolled through quiet neighborhood streets removing debris. More than 100 people received shots to guard against tetanus. Shell Creek had fallen substantially Monday, but volunteers were keeping a wary eye on the possibility of more rainfall this week.

Tornado tears up homes, trees in Indianapolis (Associated Press, 6/2)

Residents are cleaning up after a tornado left a trail of destruction across Indianapolis' east side, tearing roofs off apartments but causing only minor injuries. Eighteen people were treated for "very minor" injuries after the storm blew through late Friday, said John Ball, the area's emergency management director. The storm ripped roofs off several apartment buildings, snapped trees and toppled power lines. "It is a miracle that we didn't have serious injuries or death," he said Saturday. "A gentleman told me last night at the shelter that he was lying in bed and heard a rumble, and the roof was gone and he saw the sky." Winds snapped trees, wrapped metal sheeting around a telephone pole and left a four-block-wide trail of debris about a mile long. Gas station pumps were knocked over, roof shingles shredded, and power lines and tree branches scattered. The storm knocked out power to more than 100,000 customers. Many thousands remained without power Saturday afternoon, utilities said. The American Red Cross of Greater Indianapolis housed 170 people overnight in a church gym near a destroyed apartment complex in the city of nearly 800,000. "Some of these folks came in with the clothes on their backs or pajamas, and they were soaked, too," said spokeswoman Beth Smietana. More came later Saturday morning to register for help or pick up baby formula, bottles and diapers.

Storms weave destruction across Nebraska, Iowa (Omaha World Herald, 5/31)

In and around Aurora, the county seat with a population of 4,300, residents were cleaning up after a tornado or tornadoes and straight-line winds cut a path of damage about 10 miles long and up to 2 miles wide across Hamilton County. Forty-five homes sustained damage and five were destroyed, said Hamilton County Emergency Management Director Kirt Smith. Eighteen to 23 businesses reported damage, including a truck stop and convenience shops at the Interstate 80 interchange. Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, who was in Aurora on Friday, said, "What we're finding is that people took city officials' and weather people's warnings and took cover." Nebraska and western Iowa officials in a number of counties found dozens of destroyed and damaged homes and businesses, fallen power lines, downed tree branches -- and a remarkable lack of serious injuries. The storm clipped the northwest corner of Fairbury, a town of 4,335 people. Funnels destroyed one home and seriously damaged four others in that area, McKee said. McKee said. The

village of Reynolds was still without power around 3:30 p.m., but McKee said he expected the town's electricity to be restored by Friday evening. By the time the storm reached the Omaha area, the atmosphere was more stable and the weather less severe, meteorologists said. But the storm re-fired during the night as it moved into western Iowa. A tornado near Denison, Iowa, damaged four farmhouses, flattened sheds, uprooted trees and tossed irrigation pipe and machinery into nearby fields.

Faith Communities Focus on IA Town (Disaster News Network, 5/31)

While families do their best to gather what they can from what's left of their houses on the south side of Parkersburg, IA, faith-based groups are meeting with town officials to try to set up a long-term recovery team that will help tornado survivors get back on their feet after the volunteers with chainsaws and dumpsters are gone. A large, powerful tornado ripped through the community on Sunday leaving a tangled web of cars, buildings and farm equipment and small basketball-sized pieces of debris across the southern edge of the community west of Cedar Falls. Bill Adams of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) said while he and other faith-based leaders are meeting with town leaders, workers from Parkersburg and volunteers have already begun the work of bulldozing what is left of many homes. Other volunteers are working on a more important task: spiritual support. John Schrock, of Mennonite Disaster Service, said volunteers from his group are working with those volunteers of all denominations who are working through on-going rain, trying to gather up the debris left in the storm's wake. "We have been working with a local Baptist Church to get this work done," he said. Schrock said he plans to work with those who are assessing the situation and determine what steps will be taken next by volunteers from the MDS. Don Hampton of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has been meeting with local ministers from the Parkersburg area to put together a recovery plan. The faith community from around the country is coming together to help out, but he wants to help local pastors to be ready for the work that will be necessary after the volunteers pack up and head home.

Counties Added to Iowa Federal Disaster Declaration (FEMA, 5/30)

Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that Individual Assistance (IA) has been expanded to include two additional counties, Black Hawk and Buchanan. Public Assistance (PA), all categories is now also available for Black Hawk, Butler, Buchanan and Delaware counties under the federal presidential declaration for severe storms, tornadoes and flooding beginning May 25.

President Declares Major Disaster For Nebraska (FEMA, 5/30)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Nebraska to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding during the period of April 23-26, 2008. 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 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, tornadoes, and flooding in Gage, Johnson,

Morrill, Nemaha, and Pawnee counties . Federal funding also is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties within the state. Paulison named Thomas A. Hall as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Hall 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.

Tornadoes Hit Nebraska Towns (Disaster News Network, 5/29)

Tornadoes once again raked Nebraska Thursday night, damaging homes and other buildings in several Buffalo County communities in south central Nebraska. According to Darren Lewis of Buffalo County's emergency management agency, several tornadoes hit Kearney late Thursday causing significant damage to at least 60 houses and apartment buildings. The storm also damaged campus housing at the University of Nebraska-Kearney and buildings in the business district. Lewis said one of the tornadoes hit a trailer park and more than 80 rail cars were derailed along U.S. 30 just outside the city. An office building on the campus of Good Samaritan Hospital lost part of its roof. But as of Thursday night, no serious injuries had been reported. Members of the Nebraska National Guard will be in Kearney Friday morning to assist in the clean-up efforts. Kearney is the county seat of Buffalo County and has a population of more than 30,000. Located along U.S. 30, it is exactly in the middle of the U.S., located 1733 miles from either Boston or San Francisco. In nearby Aurora, businesses in the southern part of the community were badly damaged.

President Declares Major Disaster For Mississippi (FEMA, 5/28)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Mississippi to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on April 4, 2008. 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 Hinds 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 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 Hinds County. Federal funding also is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties within the state. Paulison named Michael L. Parker as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Parker 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.

President Declares Major Disaster For Iowa (FEMA, 5/27)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Iowa to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on May 25, 2008, and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for

the state by President Bush. The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Butler County. 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 in Butler County for emergency protective measures, limited to direct Federal assistance. Additional federal funding is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide. Paulison named William L. Vogel the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Vogel said that damage surveys are continuing in other areas, and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are fully completed in the affected areas.

President Declares Major Disaster For Colorado (FEMA, 5/26)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Colorado to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on May 22, 2008. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Larimer and Weld 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 Colorado are eligible to apply for assistance under Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Paulison named Kenneth R. Tingman as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Tingman said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

June is National Safety Month (FEMA, 6/4)

The National Safety Council (NSC) traditionally hosts National Safety Month every June to promote safety throughout the country, and this year's observances target the most significant reasons for unintentional deaths at home, in the workplace, and on the road, with the week of 2-6 June specifically set aside to encourage emergency preparedness messaging. According to FEMA Regional Administrator Susan Reinertson, engaging citizens in homeland security and disaster preparedness is a critical first step in effective government response and recovery efforts. "Calendar observances like National Safety Month are great vehicles for enhancing public awareness on the importance of personal preparedness, 72-hour emergency kits, and family disaster planning. Here in the Pacific Northwest, the spring and summer months herald increased risks for thunderstorms, wildfire and flash flooding, and now is the time to plan how to respond when disaster strikes," said Reinertson. "A good place to start is by downloading our Are You Ready? In-depth guide to Citizen Preparedness from www.ready.gov or visit FEMA's homepage

at www.fema.gov. It's our most comprehensive source on individual, family, and community preparedness."

Plans for massive earthquake drill unveiled (Whittier Daily News (CA), 6/4)

It is every Southern Californian's worst nightmare: a terrorizing 3-minute quake that topples high-rises, kills thousands and leaves entire city blocks ablaze. And it is a scenario that we can expect with near certainty in the next 20 years, according to U.S. Geological Survey scientists, who on Wednesday used a recent study of the effects of a magnitude-7.8 quake on the San Andreas Fault to announce plans for the "Great Southern California ShakeOut," the biggest earthquake drill in U.S. history. "An enormous earthquake is definitely in our future," said Lucile Jones, chief scientist for the USGS Multi-Hazards Project, speaking during a news conference at Caltech that drew civil and public safety officials from throughout the Southland. "ShakeOut is a chance for all of us to practice together what we will do when the earthquake happens, and to get ready now rather than waiting until the earthquake to act," she said. The ShakeOut drill will begin at 10 a.m. Nov. 13, when a hypothetical magnitude-7.8 quake will hit the southern San Andreas Fault. Officials are working with schools, community and church groups to coordinate disaster drills for that date and time. At the same time, thousands of firefighters, police officers and other first-responders will conduct the statewide "Golden Guardian" exercise, the largest ever to test the earthquake response preparedness of public safety agencies. Officials say the devastating effects of such a quake beg for a statewide plan to deal with the aftermath. A study conducted by the USGS Multi-Hazards Project predicted up to 1,800 deaths, \$213 billion in losses and damage to 300,000 buildings in the Southland following a magnitude-7.8 San Andreas quake.

Austin groups plan to shelter more evacuees (Austin American Statesman, 6/4)

The City of Austin on Monday announced a hurricane preparation plan to address coastal evacuations that incorporates area government agencies, nonprofit groups and businesses. It is part of a statewide effort to establish shelter "hubs" in major cities for storm victims. "This season, we're prepared to handle over 25,000 evacuees in more than 75 shelters in Travis, Williamson and Hays counties," said Scott Swearengin, assistant director of the city's Office of Emergency Management. The plan, titled Capital Area Shelter Hub, will also include a medical center that can provide care for 800 to 1,000 evacuees. The plan comes in response to the aftermath of Hurricane Rita in 2005, when the area sheltered 18,000 evacuees in 53 shelters. Lower Colorado River Authority meteorologist Bob Rose predicted that this hurricane season, which officially began Sunday, will be active. American Red Cross officials said they will be recruiting and training volunteers days before an evacuation at six local resource centers and dispatching them to the shelters. Evacuees will be told to listen to radio stations that will broadcast information in English and Spanish about the nearest available shelters. Middle and high school gymnasiums and other facilities will be used to house incoming evacuees. "As you can understand, 75 shelters sheltering 25,000 people will take hundreds and hundreds of volunteers," said Marty McKellips of the American Red Cross of Central Texas. "We will need hundreds more spontaneous volunteers to step up in that time of need." Other organizations contributing to the effort include Pets America, Hands on Central Texas and the Central Texas School Safety Consortium. Travis, Hays and Williamson county emergency

management offices will also participate. Dell Inc. will provide laptop computers, printers and projectors to assist in processing evacuees.

Ham radio partnership will help hospitals in emergencies (Chattanooga Times, 6/3)

If a natural disaster or terrorist attack hits Chattanooga, wiping out telephone lines and disrupting satellite phones, amateur radio enthusiasts will act as a lifeline among hospitals and the local health department, public health officials said Monday. A partnership between the Amateur Radio Emergency Service -- also known as "ham radio" -- and area health facilities will ensure that hospitals and public health facilities will be able to talk to each other if typical lines of communication are damaged, officials said. "We're being proactive (by) having something in place in advance, instead of in a disaster screaming for help," said Winston Shields, director of emergency management and safety at Memorial Hospital. The joint effort will be celebrated during an event at Erlanger hospital today. In a crisis situation, radio communication can be lifesaving, said Jenny Wolverton, regional hospital coordinator for emergency preparedness at the local health department. "Without that, it could really hamper patient care. It could hamper our ability to know that maybe a hospital is in distress ... much like what we saw in (Hurricane) Katrina," Ms. Wolverton said. The radio service is a national group of licensed amateur radio operators who volunteer their services in case of a disaster.

FEMA policies for the new hurricane season (Associated Press, 6/2)

The Bush administration has been lambasted for its 2005 response to Hurricane Katrina particularly the Federal Emergency Management Agency's handling of disaster housing. FEMA placed thousands of victims in travel trailers that were later found to have high levels of formaldehyde. Here are new FEMA housing policies for this hurricane season, according to a draft obtained by The Associated Press:

- Travel trailers can be used in response to catastrophic disasters only if they are tested for formaldehyde and meet a standard of a very low level of the preservative set by FEMA. FEMA did not have this requirement in 2005.
- Only the FEMA administrator can authorize trailer use.
- Disaster victims cannot stay in trailers beyond six months.
- FEMA will use alternative housing units which it is currently testing.
- FEMA will ask states to decide what types of disaster units they want, instead of leaving that decision to the federal government.
- FEMA will ask communities to decide where they want the housing units placed as opposed to FEMA making that decision.

FEMA Announces Start of Hurricane Season (FEMA, 6/1)

Text from the announcement: "Hurricane Season 2008 begins today, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants residents living in hurricane prone areas to get serious and be prepared now. The agency cited the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's May 22 prediction that projected climate conditions point to a near normal or above normal hurricane season in the Atlantic Basin this year. The first named storm of the season, Tropical Storm Arthur, developed late Friday and moved slowly across the Yucatan this weekend and FEMA is reminding people that preparing for hurricanes is a shared responsibility.

"Individuals also must prepare themselves for a hurricane," said FEMA Administrator David Paulison. "Americans in hurricane-prone states must get serious and be prepared. Government - even with the federal, tribal, state and local governments working perfectly in sync - is not the entire answer. Everyone is part of the emergency management process." "We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America in which every American takes personal responsibility for his or her own emergency preparedness." Prepare a disaster kit for your home: Stock up on non-perishable food and water to sustain you and your family for up to 72 hours or longer. Ensure you have important papers (e.g. insurance, identification), first aid kit, a supply of prescription medicines and other specialty items in your preparedness kit. In addition, plan to have an emergency kit for your car in case you need to evacuate. While creating a disaster kit, pet owners should remember to pack the necessary items for their pets."

Tropical storm forecasts have little practical value (Richmond Times Dispatch, 6/1)
Each April weather wizard William Gray emerges from his burrow deep in the Rocky Mountains to offer his forecast for the six-month hurricane season that starts June 1. And the news media are there, breathlessly awaiting his every word. It's a lot like Groundhog Day - and the results are worth just about as much. "The hairs on the back of my neck don't stand up," ho-hums Craig Fugate, director of emergency management for Florida, the state that got raked by four hurricanes - three of them "major" - in 2004. When it comes to preparing, he says, these long-range forecasts "are not useful at all." The Associated Press contacted the emergency-management agency in every coastal state from Texas to Maine and asked whether these seasonal forecasts play any role in their preparations for June 1. Their response was unanimous: They're a great way to get people thinking about the upcoming season, but that's about it. Even the insurance company that helps fund Gray's work acknowledges the forecasts are of no real-world value to its operations. Regardless, since the former Colorado State University climatologist pioneered the seasonal predictions in 1984, other forecasters have followed suit. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Tropical Storm Risk Consortium in London and, most recently, the Coastal Fluid Dynamics Laboratory at North Carolina State University in Raleigh now are among teams attempting to handicap the storm season weeks or months ahead.

Nationwide Emergency Mobile Alert to Be Realized (US House of Rep., 5/30)
Today, House Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) and Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response Chairman Henry Cuellar (D-TX) applauded the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for taking steps to support a nationwide emergency alerts and warnings system for State and local partners. On May 14, the Homeland Security Subcommittee dealing with emergency communications, Chaired by Congressman Henry Cuellar (D-TX), raised concerns about the Federal government's lack of attention to developing effective alert and warning capabilities across cell networks that State and local emergency managers could harness. The 2006 Warning Alert Response Network (WARN) Act required that a Federal agency verify emergency warnings drafted by State and local governments and provide authenticated alerts to commercial cell networks for delivery to targeted areas. Today's announcement

by DHS implies that State and local officials will soon be able to submit alerts and warnings to their partners at FEMA who will propagate legitimate messages to commercial mobile service providers on their behalf. "In times of crisis, people require information and expect the government to provide it. This Committee's careful oversight of FEMA has produced another win for the American public. FEMA's commitment to carry out this task begins to fill an unnecessary hole in our nation's emergency response capability. I welcome FEMA's acceptance of this important role and will monitor its development and implementation carefully. Our nation's communities and their leaders deserve nothing less," said Chairman Cuellar.

Poll finds Floridians not ready for active storm season (Sarasota Tribune, 5/30)

Hurricane Katrina may have been a wake-up call to residents in coastal states, but only three years later they are nearly as unprepared as they were before the catastrophe, according to a Mason-Dixon poll released Thursday. Fewer than half of the people surveyed earlier this month said they had a family disaster plan, and only a third said they had a disaster supply kit with basic supplies such as flashlights. "Everybody suddenly got freaked out after Katrina, and now, we have two quiet seasons and people are back to, 'eh, oh well,'" said Mason-Dixon pollster Brad Coker. In 2006, the year immediately following Katrina, pollsters saw a spike in preparedness, with more people saying they put up shutters and stocked supplies. At that time, Floridians were also coming off the storm-packed 2004 and 2005 seasons. An additional 15 percent of people said they developed a hurricane survival plan that year. This year, the level is nearly the same as it was before Katrina, with only about 40 percent of people saying they had a plan. Emergency managers said the new trend is disturbing, especially in a year in which forecasters have predicted about 15 storms.

FL Planners want grocery chains to handle emergency ice (S. FL Sun Sentinel, 5/26)

Almost \$2 million worth of ice that the government stockpiled for Floridians during the 2006 hurricane season went to waste. This year, emergency managers are predicting that there won't be major meltdowns of that sort. Their solution: Leave it to grocery chains, rather than government agencies, to provide the bulk of ice deliveries during major power outages. That wasn't the case just two years ago. Bagged, bundled and stored in warehouses in Central Florida and Jacksonville, 9 million pounds of ice became a logistical nightmare and a costly (\$90,000 a month) storage problem for Florida's emergency managers. Water, like most consumables, eventually runs the risk of spoilage, and Florida's ice overstock of a few years ago is an issue on the minds of authorities as the 2008 hurricane season approaches. "It was a one-time issue, due mainly to the fact that we did not get [hit by] a major storm in the 2006 hurricane season," said Blair Heusdens, a spokesman for the Florida State Emergency Response Team. This year, to prevent unnecessary public expense and because more groceries are now equipped with backup power generators to reopen quickly, agencies are counting on the public sector to provide most of the ice that locals might seek after a storm. Meanwhile, officials say the public can prepare themselves better for short-term power outages with their own little stock of ice. One tactic to try: fill a gallon plastic jug with water and freeze it. A goal is to free government workers to concentrate on higher priorities than ice delivery during disaster response.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

New Orleans plans to enforce trailer policy (Associated Press, 6/6)

The city is moving ahead with efforts to rid New Orleans of all federally issued trailers by the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Beginning July 1, the city will begin enforcing an ordinance that makes it illegal to live in travel trailers and recreational vehicles, the mayor's office said in a release Thursday. FEMA has posted notices of the deadline on trailers. As of Tuesday, nearly 4,930 FEMA trailers remained in New Orleans nearly all on private lots and generally in front of hurricane-damaged homes. Residents who need more time need to file for extensions by July 1, and those deemed to have extenuating circumstances may get extensions. Proving they are in litigation with their insurer; waiting for rebuilding aid through the state's Road Home program; are actively repairing their home and have a target date for completion; have a loan and contract signed for rebuilding or repairs or other "special circumstances" could earn an extension of 30, 60 or 90 days, the city said. City spokesman James Ross said Thursday that requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. City officials said violators will be subject to a possible fine of up to \$500 a day and eviction. Ross said there will be an administrative hearing process for residents found in violation of the ordinance. It's possible the hearing process could run past Aug. 29, leaving trailers in the city past Mayor Ray Nagin's target date for having trailers gone, he said. The city is getting serious about trailers, citing concerns about potentially dangerous levels of formaldehyde fumes and safety, with another hurricane season again under way.

Jefferson Parish touts progress in removing FEMA trailers (N.O. City Business, 6/5)

Jefferson Parish officials say they are continuing to make progress in removing FEMA trailers from unincorporated areas. The parish said there are about 545 trailers in unincorporated areas. After the 2005 hurricane season, there were 17,000 trailers across the both banks of the parish, including the six municipalities. On April 1, 2007, an emergency provision to parish law allowing the trailers expired. On April 17, 2008, the parish attorney's office began to take legal action against property owners who continued to have trailers. So far, 159 lawsuits have been filed.

La. officials worry about buses for evacuations (Associated Press, 6/4)

As many as 39,000 people could be stranded in New Orleans without a way to get out of the city if a hurricane threatens the Gulf Coast this season, officials said Wednesday. Emergency officials preparing for the peak of hurricane season are worried there may not be enough buses to help people evacuate and they want to avoid the gut-wrenching scenes that followed Hurricane Katrina people stranded in the Superdome, on rooftops begging for water, food and rescue. "If a big hurricane begins heading into the Gulf Coast, there could be five states scrambling to get buses," said Matthew Kallmyer, deputy director of the New Orleans Office of Emergency Preparedness. "At some point it becomes a checkbook issue, who can write the big check quickest." Under guidelines developed after Katrina struck in August 2005, no shelters in New Orleans or surrounding parishes will open if a Category 3 or greater hurricane heads this way and government officials issue a mandatory evacuation. That means the elderly, people with

special medical needs and others without transportation will need a ride out of town. That's as many as 25,000 in New Orleans alone, not including the nearby parishes. Louisiana has negotiated for 700 commercial coach-style buses for use in all Southeast Louisiana, Kallmyer said. "We may well have to depend on city and state assets for an evacuation," Kallmyer said. School buses are an option, but cost and legal liability issues remain, he said. The city could press Regional Transit Authority buses into service, he said. RTA now has about 58 buses and hopes to have another 38 by the end of August, spokeswoman Rosalind Cook said.

St. Bernard, Plaquemines hail post-Katrina strides (N.O. Times Picayune, 6/1)
St. Bernard and Plaquemines have come a long way in the nearly three years since Hurricane Katrina battered both parishes, emergency planners say. "Our vulnerability has been significantly reduced," said David Dysart, director of homeland security and emergency preparedness for St. Bernard Parish. "We are sitting in a lot better position than last year." In Plaquemines Parish, Philip Truxillo, director of homeland security and emergency preparedness, said officials feel confident the parish can withstand whatever hurricane season brings. "We're so much better off than we were last year," Truxillo said. "We've made a lot of improvements." One thing officials in both parishes stress: Neither parish will open a shelter and residents should prepare their evacuation plans now. Dysart said the St. Bernard levees are in much better shape, fewer trailers dot the landscape and most of the debris left in the wake of Katrina has been removed. And many of the trailers that do remain sit in front of homes that have been rebuilt or are far along in the process. St. Bernard officials will make use of a siren system to alert residents of emergencies, as well as a low-power AM radio station that can broadcast storm and evacuation information. Like last year, the parish will call for a mandatory evacuation of residents living outside the levee system or in trailers or mobile homes if a Category 1 hurricane is scheduled to make landfall within 50 miles of the parish. Other parish residents could fall under a mandatory evacuation for a Category 1 storm depending on the size of the hurricane, predicted storm surge and predicted landfall.

Louisiana Social Services unveils evacuee tracking software (Advocate, 5/31)
In preparation for the hurricane season that starts Sunday, the state Department of Social Services on Friday unveiled a new system to track evacuees transported to state-run shelters. With the swipe of a driver's license, a Web-based software system will generate a record of a person that corresponds with a coded wristband. Children and pets can also be added to an individual's record. The system also creates a bus manifest and is updated when a person arrives at a shelter. DSS Secretary Ann Silverberg Williamson said parishes took the lead on evacuating and sheltering residents in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated the state's coast. But the relocation of residents far and wide, and the numerous phone calls and Internet searches that ensued as people tried to find family members and friends, spurred DSS to look into a more centralized and clear database for evacuees, Williamson said. Only people evacuated by state-operated buses to state-run shelters will be registered into the system. The Department of Social Services, known as DSS, will operate three types of state-run shelters for 11,680 residents who need transportation assistance, have special medical needs and sex offenders. Spaces for 67,000 residents who can transport themselves are available at shelters throughout the

state, coordinated through parish governments and volunteer organizations, like the American Red Cross.

New study on Katrina-mental health; group presses for help (AP, 5/31)

People being moved out of Hurricane Katrina trailers will need immediate help from social service agencies, the president of the Children's Health Fund said Friday. "These were high-risk families, traumatized by the storm and flooding and displaced for almost three years in a very traumatic recovery arrangement," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, who is also the director of Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness. "And that recovery has actually been more problematic and more flawed than the original response, though it's just not been as visible." As president of the Children's Health Fund, Redlener said, he was faxing a letter Friday to Gov. Bobby Jindal. The letter, e-mailed to The Associated Press, said Jindal needs to get FEMA to give Louisiana both case management files on those families and the money to help them. The state already had asked FEMA for money for comprehensive case management, said Paul Rainwater, director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. "We hope FEMA will move to quickly approve our plans and get us the dollars we desperately need to close this difficult chapter in the lives of many of our families who were so deeply impacted by the storms." A study by both of Redlener's groups, released Friday by the journal Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness, said more than half the Louisiana and Mississippi residents still in FEMA trailers have significant mental health problems. Children moved out of FEMA trailers are going to temporary housing, Redlener wrote Jindal. They suffer from persistent stress and mental health problems, chronic illness, and little or no access to consistent medical care. They are doing much worse in school than other children.

Kids in Katrina trailers may face lifelong ailments (Associated Press, 5/28)

The anguish of Hurricane Katrina should have ended for Gina Bouffanie and her daughter when they left their FEMA trailer. But with each hospital visit and each labored breath her child takes, the young mother fears it has just begun. "It's just the sickness. I can't get rid of it. It just keeps coming back," said Bouffanie, 27, who was pregnant with her now 15-month-old daughter, Lexi, while living in the trailer. "I'm just like, 'Oh God, I wish like this would stop.' If I had known it would get her sick, I wouldn't have stayed in the trailer for so long." The girl, diagnosed with severe asthma, must inhale medicine from a breathing device. Doctors cannot conclusively link her asthma to the trailer. But they fear she is among tens of thousands of youngsters who may face lifelong health problems because the temporary housing supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency contained formaldehyde fumes up to five times the safe level. The chemical, used in interior glue, was detected in many of the 143,000 trailers sent to the Gulf Coast in 2006. But a push to get residents out of them, spearheaded by FEMA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, did not begin until this past February. Members of Congress and CDC insiders say the agencies' delay in recognizing the danger is being compounded by studies that will be virtually useless and the lack of a plan to treat children as they grow.