

Disaster News Update –September 24 to 30, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, West Virginia, New York, Maryland
- **Fire:** None
- **Hazmat:** Nevada (Chemical Release), Kentucky (Tanker Rail Car Accident)
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Iowa
- **Wind:** Iowa, New Hampshire, Florida

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/25)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/21)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/14)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornado (9/7)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (9/7)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornado (8/31)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/31)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/30)
- [Nebraska](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/29)
- [Ohio](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/27)
- [Wisconsin](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/26)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (8/24)
- Fire Declarations: [Washington \(9/21\)](#), [Oregon \(9/3\)](#), [Idaho \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho2 \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho \(8/29\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Gulf Coast Red Cross Growing Ranks (WKRK.Com, 9/29)

The Red Cross Gulf Coast Chapter wants to strengthen their relief efforts. The chapter says volunteers along the Gulf Coast have had plenty of practice with storm recovery, a major reason for launching the "Ready When the Time Comes Program." "This area is so blessed with many many hurricanes, bad weather, train derailments, a port that has a great risk of chemical spills...there's many reasons," said Leisle Mims, Executive Director, Red Cross Gulf Coast Chapter. That is why the Gulf Coast Red Cross has partnered up with corporations like Airbus, and W.W. Grainger to recruit and train employees from businesses across the U.S. So when the time comes the Red Cross can provide the Mobile area with the help it needs. "So often in times a disaster, our employees want to help, we know they need to help and there's so much power when you can mobilize people that are wanting to help, with a plan," said Michael Sisk, Vice President, W.W. Grainger. "It's important that they're pre-trained so they know what to expect and we can deploy them immediately into a shelter, to a chemical spill to whatever

the disaster is," said Mims.

DHS Announces \$24M in Homeland Security Nonprofit Grants (DHS, 9/28)

DHS announced the FY2007 Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) awards. These awards total more than \$24 million and support target hardening and security screening activities in select non-profit organizations that are deemed at high-risk of a potential terrorist attack. Grants are being awarded to nonprofit organizations according to criteria that include:

- Prior identified and substantiated threats or attacks by a terrorist organization, corroborated by intelligence or law enforcement reporting, toward the nonprofit or closely-related organization, either within or outside the United States;
- Symbolic value of a site as a highly recognized national or historical institution that renders it a possible terrorist target;
- Organization's role in responding to or recovering from terrorist attacks; and
- Organization's credible threat or vulnerability, as well as the potential consequences of an attack, as determined by a previously conducted risk assessment.

NSGP grants seek to integrate nonprofit preparedness activities with broader state and local preparedness efforts. The program is also designed to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives, state and local government agencies, and Citizen Corps Councils. 308 nonprofit organizations will be awarded funds.

See the grants:

http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/FY2007_UASI_NonProfit_Security_Grant_Awards_AWARD_LIST.pdf

Cupertino (CA) students prepare residents for disaster (SJ Mercury News, 9/27)

There is a 62 percent chance that at least one magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake--which would cause widespread damage - will strike the Bay Area before 2032, according to a report by the U.S. Geological Survey. With odds of 2 to 1 of a major quake happening in that time span, the question is: Are you prepared for a natural disaster? If you're not, and you live in Cupertino, there's an enthusiastic group of Monta Vista High School students willing to help. "We're hoping to get everyone in Cupertino prepared at what we call the basic level," says Krishi Peddada, Monta Vista senior and president of the High Schoolers for a Better Community club. The club was formed in April 2006 in order to introduce a new type of community service in Cupertino. Its underlying principle is to engage in community service projects and ongoing community events, so members can participate in all phases of the project, learn project management and gain people skills. "We're trying to create a new set of volunteers that value dedication," says Krishi. Currently, the club has 30 members.

Lutheran Disaster Response Needs Help in PA (Disaster Volunteer Blog, 9/26)

"If you're a Pennsylvania resident looking for some disaster volunteer opportunities - Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has some work for you. Julia Menzo of LDR in Pennsylvania recently advertised opportunities in the northeastern part of the state. She also announced some farther away:

Volunteer for a Week: Communities across the Midwest are beginning the long process of cleaning up after severe storms and widespread flooding left portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Ohio inundated. Housing is available. Volunteers are mucking out, cleaning, and removing debris, particularly for those unable to do it for themselves. Rebuilding is beginning in some areas.

Volunteer for a Day: Northeastern Pennsylvania is still recovering from flooding last June. Volunteers are needed in towns as close as Berks, Schuylkill and Luzerne Counties to continue clean up with homeowners, and to begin the process of rebuilding. Estimators are needed to help provide assessments of damages as well. If you have a team interested in learning more, or if you would like to be a part of a team, contact Linda Frey at 610-847-5775 or lwfrey@epix.net.

Miami (OK) volunteers sought for disaster recovery work (Joplin Globe, 9/25)

A newly formed coalition wants volunteers to work with Miami residents who need assistance recovering from the Fourth of July flood. "Our focus is long-term recovery," said Tisha Abell, executive director of the Ottawa County United Way and president of the community disaster recovery coalition. "The whole point is to have those unmet needs of local people taken care of." About 40 volunteers are needed, she said. Representatives from more than 50 organizations and churches began meeting about two months ago to form the coalition to assist people who still have needs, including those displaced by the flooding. "Housing is a great need," Abell said. More than 500 homes were destroyed or severely damaged by the July flood. At its height, about 30 percent of Miami was under water. Between 1,500 and 2,000 people were evacuated. The city sustained about \$8 million in damage to city property, and Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College was hit with damage estimated at \$11 million to \$12 million. Those figures do not include damage to private homes and businesses.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Legislators propose forming Kansas State Guard (Kansas.Com, 9/30)

Some legislators wonder if Kansas needs a volunteer State Guard that would be called to duty during emergencies. But the Kansas National Guard says it can do the job just fine. "The Kansas National Guard has sufficient manpower to meet the state's foreseeable needs for defense and disaster relief," said Col. Bruce Woolpert, legal adviser to Tod Bunting, adjutant general of the Kansas National Guard and the state's director of Homeland Security. A proposal from Sen. Dennis Pyle, R-Hiawatha, would create a Kansas State Guard. It would be made up of Kansas residents at least 18 years of age who would volunteer and would not be paid unless the governor calls them to active duty. Pyle told the Lawrence Journal-World that having a State Guard would mean Kansas was "prepared for an emergency at all times with a ready and able defense force." But Woolpert pointed out that even if the Kansas National Guard is stretched by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, it still has been able to respond to natural disasters in the state. He also said the expense of establishing the State Guard would make it impractical. According to the state budget office, startup costs would be \$3.5 million to cover training in law enforcement practices and procedures, food, arms and equipment, physical exams

for volunteers, vehicle fuel and other expenses. But that figure doesn't include heavy equipment that might be needed in an emergency.

Tuscaloosa Holds Statewide Preparedness Day (Tuscaloosa News, 9/29)

The city of Tuscaloosa played host Friday to the fourth annual Be Ready Day, a statewide event that takes its message of emergency preparedness to a different city each year. This year's event, at Tuscaloosa Regional Airport from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., drew a crowd of more than 2,000 people from throughout the state, as well as about 70 paid and volunteer first-response organizations that set up information booths about their roles during disasters across the airport. Gov. Bob Riley, whose Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Homeland Security created Be Ready Day, was also in attendance.

Tulsa Fair to Feature Disaster Resistant Building Tips (Media Newswire, 9/27)

Tulsa fair attendees will be able to receive disaster-resistant building tips while visiting the Tulsa Fair Sept. 27-Oct. 7. FEMA specialists will provide information on disaster-resistant building practices at the FEMA booth #176 located on the lower level of the Exposition Center at 4145 East 21st St. in Tulsa. Rebuilding or repairing a home after flooding or any disaster can be a big task. But with the right information, homeowners and business owners can build back in a way that reduces the likelihood of future damages, according to officials with FEMA and the SBA.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

50 N.C. Businesses Affected, Gov. Declares Disaster Area (Insurance Journal, 9/27)

Gov. Mike Easley declared Spruce Pine, N.C. a state disaster area to help offset damages caused by a series of fires Aug. 4 and Aug. 5, making the town eligible for financial assistance. More than 50 businesses were significantly impacted or destroyed by back-to-back fires in the Mitchell County town. "The fires destroyed a significant portion of downtown Spruce Pine," said Easley. "Since a thriving downtown is vital to the economy of our smaller communities, we have a responsibility to help them rebuild." The town qualifies for a Type 1 Disaster Declaration and is eligible to receive state disaster aid to repair and rebuild public structures. Damage estimates for the town were not high enough to meet criteria for a federal disaster declaration. Spruce Pine is eligible for a state level disaster because the town proclaimed a local state of emergency and damage estimates exceed one percent of the town's annual operating budget.

Northwood (ND) Still Recovering from Tornado (KXNet.Com, 9/26)

It was one month ago today that a Tornado slammed into Northwood, killing one person, injuring 18 others and devastating the community. Residents continue to pick up the pieces. More than 230 people have now registered for help from FEMA. FEMA's Barb Sturner says the agency has doled out nearly 203-thousand-dollars to date primarily for household assistance. President Bush last month declared Northwood a disaster area for public buildings and infrastructure. Federal officials later approved individual aid. The

Red Cross estimated damage to public and private property at between 30 million and 58 million dollars.

President Declares Major Disaster For Illinois (FEMA, 9/25)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Illinois to help people and communities recover from the effects of severe storms and flooding during the period of August 20-31, 2007. 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 DeKalb, Grundy, Kane, LaSalle, Lake, and Will counties. The assistance, to be coordinated by FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. SBA 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 flooding in DeKalb, Kane, and LaSalle counties. Federal funding is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Tony Russell as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Russell said that damage surveys are continuing in other areas, and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are complete.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

US Rewriting Homeland Security Strategy (UPI International, 9/27)

An effort is under way within the Bush administration to revise its homeland security strategy to give more weight to protection from natural disasters. The new strategy will also outline a more aggressive posture towards terrorism and use risk management to drive the allocation of federal resources. Earlier this week homeland security blogger and business executive Jonah Czerwinski posted PowerPoint slides used by White House Homeland Security Council staff to brief others on the effort. He told UPI that staff had been briefing with the slides all week, and that a set had been posted on the Web site of the Indiana state Department of Homeland Security. The slides say a rewrite of the strategy is necessary to address the changing nature of the threats to the United States and to "align dozens of existing (policy) initiatives, and subordinate strategies, plans, and reports." The slides say the definition of homeland security should be changed to reflect the dangers of natural disasters.

OH Building Monolithic Domes for Wind Protection (Disaster News Network, 9/27)

Mobile home residents throughout Licking County in Ohio will be breathing a little easier next year when severe weather or tornadoes threaten their area thanks to what is being described as a first-in-the-nation governmental plan to build monolithic domes as storm shelters. "We're trying to save lives and prevent injuries," said Jim Mickey, an environmental planner with the county who has been working on the project for two

years. "Anything you can do to reduce the risk for people and their property has to be a good thing." The cost of the six monolithic domes – steel-reinforced concrete structures – will be split 80-20 between the federal government and the mobile home park owners. FEMA has approved a grant of \$776,000 for the domes, which will be erected at six separate sites. Licking County, the second largest county in Ohio and located east of Columbus, is the first governmental agency to order monolithic domes for storm shelters, according to David B. South, president of the Monolithic Dome Institute in Italy, Texas. The domes, which will range in size from approximately 32 feet in diameter up to 50 feet in diameter – roughly 800 to 2,000 square feet - will be welcomed by the storm-plagued area, Mickey said.

Aurora (CO) Emergency Management compiles disaster database (YourHub.Com, 9/27)

Aurora's Office of Emergency Management is compiling a database of residents with special needs so emergency planners can assist them more effectively during a large scale disaster. Residents can voluntarily submit information to the city, and the information will eventually be placed into a mapping system so planners can pinpoint locations where residents need extra help. Special needs include use of a wheelchair or ventilator, being deaf or hearing impaired, or could include any special circumstances that require additional assistance. Aurora's database is one of the first in the region. "It's a way for us to be proactive and help people who need special assistance," Aurora Fire Capt. Deanne Criswell said. Residents who want to submit their special needs information can call 303-739-7636 and have a form mailed to them, or they can download the form by going to auroragov.org, clicking on the "Emergency Preparedness" quick link, then clicking on "Special Needs Registry."

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Residents who elevated may be ineligible for Road Home (NO Times Picayune, 9/30)

Residents who elevated their homes may now be ineligible to receive thousands of dollars in Road Home grants. Steve Donahue did what he was supposed to do: He and thousands of other New Orleanians raised their flood-prone homes. But in doing so, they may be ineligible to receive thousands of dollars in Road Home grants intended to help elevate their houses. Steve Donahue has lived without a lot of things. He lost his legs in 1984 due to a circulatory disease. His disability caused him to leave his job in the oil business. And then there was the home his grandfather built in Gentilly, flooded by 5 feet of water after Hurricane Katrina. But nothing stopped Donahue, and his tenacity was on full display in May when he collected a \$105,000 Road Home grant and immediately started rebuilding. The money was \$30,000 less than Donahue expected, as he learned at the grant closing that money to help him elevate his home had been put on hold. Far from Donahue's New Orleans home, state and federal officials were in a dispute about the rules governing the elevation grants. As soon as it was worked out, Donahue was told, he'd get the additional grant. Donahue, 50, plowed forward, climbing ladders with only his arms to propel him so he could get into the shell of his house, which has been raised and rests 8 feet above the ground. Yet the initiative and determination shown by Donahue might cost him, along with as many as 29,000 other residents -- people who did not let bureaucratic tangles slow them down.

Inside Katrina's Red Tape (ABC News, 9/25)

Nearly 2,000 pages spell out in excruciating detail something that is plain to Virgil Tiller but not FEMA: His school was destroyed and needs to be rebuilt. The pages are a piece-by-piece inventory of everything wrecked by Hurricane Katrina from the roof right down to the bathroom fixtures at Alfred Lawless High School in New Orleans' devastated Lower Ninth Ward. But FEMA has yet to find the school is 51 percent destroyed the clerical benchmark that must be reached before the agency will pay to completely rebuild something. And so, two years after Katrina, while the state and federal government haggle over the extent of the damage, the school lies empty, a ruin of toppled bricks, sagging roofs and missing window panes. "The kids here were used to disappointment. Leaving this school like this is another form of disappointment, not just for them, but for the entire community," said Tiller, a 30-year-old former music teacher at what was the only public high school in the Lower Ninth. "How can anyone look at this and say it is not 51 percent destroyed?" The answer to Tiller's question lies in "project worksheets," forms that are used to inventory damage to a facility down to the smallest pieces, and often go through multiple versions as they wend their way through the bureaucracy. The PWs which measure the rebuilding needs of thousands of Gulf Coast schools, roads, hospitals, firehouses and other public projects are the red tape that politicians and policy makers bemoan when they speak of the slow rebuilding from Katrina.

2 Years After Rita, Thousands in Need (Disaster News Network, 9/24)

Major needs remain in southeast Texas two years after Hurricane Rita, with a lack of funding and support making the situation worse, according to disaster recovery workers. An estimated 15,000 families are still in need across the 22 affected counties, said Joe Higgs of the Southeast Texas Interfaith Organization. One issue hampering the recovery, he said, was the slow pace of distributing federal funds by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and three southeast Texas councils on government. Of the \$250 million in federal funds allocated to the state to repair homes and property, only 1 percent - \$200,000 - has been spent, according to published reports. The councils on government were tasked by community affairs in August 2006 to distribute the first \$40 million of grants for home repairs and rebuilding to low-income residents. An editorial by the interfaith organization said that in the last year, the three councils "have managed to return only 13 families to their repaired or reconstructed homes." The community affairs department also recently reshuffled \$11 million of community development block grants for low-income residents so that the funds would only be available for rehabilitation and reconstruction rather than emergency repairs. Higgs and other interfaith members expressed concern that the move would help fewer people.

FEMA assistance for Hurricane Rita recovery tops \$2 billion (FEMA, 9/24)

So far, FEMA has provided more than \$914 million in Public Assistance funding toward debris removal, hurricane-related emergency services and repair and reconstruction of the infrastructure that Rita damaged in Texas and Louisiana. FEMA has provided more than \$1.13 billion to over 400,000 households in Louisiana and Texas to help families recover from Rita. Of that total, \$935.7 million has covered rental assistance, temporary lodging and housing repairs for those affected by the hurricane. Another \$198.8 million has been

Prepared by Project TADS for the Corporation for National and Community Service

provided through FEMA's Other Needs Assistance Program to cover loss of personal property, medical costs and other serious disaster-related expenses not covered by insurance.