

Disaster News Update –January 2 to 6, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 5 days)

- **Drought:** Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky
- **Fire:** Oklahoma, Texas
- **Flooding / Flash Flooding:** Nevada
- **Heavy Rain:** South Carolina
- **Severe Winter Weather:** California, Oregon, Nevada
- **Strong Wind:** California, Oregon
- **Transportation Accident:** Texas (Bus Crash)

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Iowa](#): Severe Winter Storm (1/4)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/27)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/18)
- [Kansas](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/12 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/12 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/10 - Emergency Declaration)
- [Washington](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (12/8)
- [Oregon](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (12/8)
- Fire Declarations: N/A

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Joining Forces to Stem Flooding (New York Times, 1/6)

For weeks at a time last year, Vanessa Wood's property here looked more like a pond than a backyard. Mrs. Wood and her family live along Stony Brook, which flows from as far north as New Canaan and into the Long Island Sound. In the past year it has overflowed its banks four times. Mrs. Wood -- one of dozens of Darien home and business owners severely affected by flooding -- started a blog last spring, DarienFlooding, to inform residents and those outside Darien about the problem. Last month, Mrs. Wood, with Laura Giobbi, another resident whose home was damaged, decided to join efforts with a nonprofit group, Save Darien's Wetlands. The group's new focus is to rally homeowners who have been affected by floods and to demand that the town come up with solutions to protect homes and businesses, particularly by enforcing stricter building regulations. While Darien has a history of overflowing watersheds, many factors have contributed to the recent flooding. Peter N. Hillman, chairman of the town Environmental Protection Commission and the Flood Erosion Control Board, pointed to significant residential and commercial development in town. He said that Darien was 98.5 percent developed, a figure he called astounding. Climate change and aging infrastructure have also played a role, Mr. Hillman said. Darien is a coastal town and much of inland Connecticut naturally runs into it, he said. "Water has to go down the

drain," Mr. Hillman said. "And some of our rivers start considerably far north and west of town."

Volunteers sought for Habitat home build (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/3)

East St. Tammany Habitat for Humanity is looking for volunteers, especially those from Lutheran churches, to help build a Lutheran-sponsored home that will start Ash Wednesday. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans awarded the local Habitat affiliate a grant to cover 65 percent of the home build and calls for Habitat to pay 25 percent and local Lutheran churches to pay 10 percent of the remaining cost, said Nancy Wood, Habitat media director and a Thrivent chapter specialist. Six Lutheran churches on the north shore already have committed money and their congregations to the build and sent representatives to a recent project meeting. Habitat volunteers will build the home, beginning Feb. 6, on land that a partnering family owns in Lacombe. "The Parkers have been waiting a long time -- since October of 2005," she said. The family, which includes Shirley Parker and her two children, had to wait a year to get a FEMA trailer, in Hurricane Katrina's aftermath. Prior to the storm, the Parkers were living in unfavorable conditions in a trailer. Wood said it is important for local people who have had to focus on recovery and rebuilding in the past to volunteer for future Habitat building projects. People from across the nation and other countries, such as Canada and England, have been volunteering with the local affiliate. To volunteer, call Volunteer Coordinator Lindsay Grove at East St. Tammany Habitat for Humanity at (985) 639-0656.

Volunteers reduce the burden of cleanup (Tulsa World, 1/2)

Volunteers offering cleanup help to fellow Sand Springs residents also help save the city money, officials say. December's ice storm left much damage to the city -- damage volunteers are working to repair. Assistant Police Chief Mike Carter, acting as director of the recovery effort, said Sand Springs already has many residents lending a hand to friends and neighbors. "We have a lot of people out there right now that are helping," Carter said. From clearing branches to doing safety checks, neighbors are helping neighbors. "(There are) also people who do other things like surveying the streets for dangerous situations ... as well as they may do other volunteer efforts to help people," he said. Carter said volunteer hours count toward the city's official recovery effort, so city officials are asking volunteers to fill out a form documenting the work they have done. "Tulsa County is declared for public assistance, which includes roads, bridges and other infrastructure and cleanup," said Michelann Ooten, public information officer for the Oklahoma Office of Emergency Management. Each volunteer hour logged counts as time the city spends cleaning up, leaving Sand Springs with more money to put toward the effort. "That increases the amount of dollars the city has to pay for recovery," Ooten said. In addition to logging hours, city officials want to create an organized system for those providing and requesting cleanup services. "If we have elderly folks or disabled people, ... we are going to act as a clearinghouse," Carter said. "We can't guarantee we will have those volunteers."

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

N/A

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Levee breaks in Nevada (Associated Press, 1/6)

A ruptured levee sent a frigid "wall of water" from a rain-swollen canal into this high desert town early Saturday, flooding hundreds of homes and forcing the rescue of dozens of people by helicopter and boat. To the west, a dangerous layer of heavy snow covered the Northern California mountains as rain and wind from the third storm in as many days hit the West Coast. The storms have been blamed for at least three deaths, and hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in California, Oregon and Washington were without power Saturday. No injuries were reported in the flood in Fernley, about 30 miles east of Reno, after a section of the Truckee Canal levee up to 150 feet long broke soon after 4 a.m. As many as 3,500 people were temporarily stranded and an estimated 1,500 ended up being displaced from their homes, Huntley said Saturday night. About 25 people remained at a shelter set up at a high school after a peak of about 150 earlier in the day. Eric Cornett estimated the water was about 2 feet deep and rising fast when drove away from his home with his wife and three children.

Death toll at 3 amid West Coast storms (Associated Press, 1/6)

Winter storm warnings remained in effect for some mountainous areas and the main highway through the Sierra Nevada was closed during the night. Residents were warned of possible mudslides in parts of rain-soaked Southern California where slopes had been denuded by the fall's wildfires. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared emergencies in three counties hit hard by the storms, and Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski declared a state of emergency for one county that had severe wind damage. At least 5 feet of snow had fallen on ski areas in the rugged Sierra Nevada by early Sunday, with 9 feet possible at some higher elevations, the National Weather Service said. As much as 3 feet more could hit the area by Tuesday evening, the weather service said. Blizzard conditions in the mountains during the night prompted authorities to again close nearly 100 miles of Interstate 80 from about 30 miles east of Sacramento to just over the Nevada state line, but the California Department of Transportation's Web site later said it was open to vehicles with chains or with a combination of 4-wheel-drive and snow tires. More than 220,000 homes and businesses in Northern California were still without power Sunday, and Pacific Gas and Electric said the storm had downed nearly 500 miles of power lines and more than 500 utility poles throughout the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay area. Repair crews in the snow-covered Sierra foothills will have to use snowshoes, all-terrain vehicles and helicopters, utility officials said.

Searchers recover body of 13-year-old WA girl killed in avalanche (AP, 1/6)

Search crews have recovered the body of a 13-year-old girl who was killed in an avalanche while hiking in the Cascade Mountains northeast of Seattle. The girl, whose name was not immediately released, was hiking with a group of six children, ages 12 to 16, and a 45-year-old man, when the avalanche struck Friday afternoon near Mount Pilchuck. Initially, four children were trapped in the slide. One boy freed himself, and the

group rescued two other girls, Snohomish County sheriff's spokeswoman Rebecca Hover told The Herald of Everett. The group called for help at a nearby visitor's center after spending an hour searching for the 13-year-old girl from Mukilteo, Hover said. Sheriff's and volunteer mountain rescue teams found her late Friday night and brought her body off the mountain early Saturday. "As sad as this situation is, as tragic as it is, we were relieved and surprised that we didn't have more fatalities," Hover said.

Extreme storm pummels West (Disaster News Network, 1/5)

One of the worst storms in nearly three years barreled across California and into Nevada, Utah and Colorado Saturday, with high winds, heavy rain, snow and threat of flash flooding and mudslides. The storm knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of homes and more than 500,000 homes were still reported to be without power Saturday. Two people were reported to have died as a result of the storm. The heavy rain that had weakened the bank of an agricultural canal in western Nevada contributed to a levee break Saturday morning, which sent water cascading into Fernley, forcing emergency officials to evacuate hundreds of residents. As many as 850 residents who had lived near the Trappe Canal, were evacuated to a nearby high school set up as a shelter. Emergency officials said the water was approximately 3-feet deep in some locations. The Nevada Highway Patrol reported at least 200 homes were damaged by flood waters. Evacuations were also ordered Friday night for approximately 3,000 people who live in portions of Orange County, CA, where last fall's wildfires stripped vegetation from hillsides making the areas prone to mudslides. Flash flood warnings were posted across a large portion of the two states. Residents in many areas where streams have a history of flooding during heavy rains, piled sandbags and bales of straw in front of doorways in an attempt to protect their homes. The National Weather Service said as much as 10-feet of snow could be dropped on parts of the Sierra Nevada mountain range by Sunday night. Interstate 80, the main east-west highway between Nevada and Northern California, was closed by highway officials Friday night. Shelters for stranded motorists were set up.

Ore. governor declares emergency for Umatilla County (Associated Press, 1/5)

Gov. Ted Kulongoski has declared a state of emergency for Umatilla County to help cope with the impact of a Pacific storm that spread high winds and damage through parts of the state. The cities of Adams, Athena, Milton-Freewater, Pilot Rock and Weston were the hardest hit, according to the governor's office. "We actually had houses that had their roofs blown off," said J.B. Brock, emergency services manager in neighboring Union County. The emergency declaration allows Umatilla County to immediately receive any state assistance needed and begin processing any requests for individual assistance through FEMA. The storm that slammed into the West Coast on Friday interrupted travel on the two main interstate freeways in Oregon and forced the closure of the Mount Ashland ski area due to blizzard conditions. Shipping traffic was stalled Friday after high winds and surf forced the Coast Guard to close the Tillamook Bay and Columbia River bars.

President Declares Major Disaster For Iowa (FEMA, 1/4)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Iowa to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm

during the period of December 10-11, 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 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 storms in Adair, Adams, Appanoose, Cedar, Clarke, Clinton, Davis, Decatur, Fremont, Iowa, Jefferson, Johnson, Jones, Keokuk, Linn, Lucas, Madison, Mahaska, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, Taylor, Union, Van Buren, Wapello, Warren, Washington, and Wayne counties. The federal declaration clears the way for necessary public assistance to state and local governments. Federal funding is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Justo Hernandez the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Hernandez said additional designations and types of assistance 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

UMPI campus earns StormReady designation (Bangor Daily News, 1/4)

Much of the state has been pummeled recently by winter storms that have challenged residents and emergency crews alike with snow, sleet and ice. But a Presque Isle college campus has taken steps to help residents, city leaders and emergency response agencies be better prepared to deal with nature's worst. The University of Maine at Presque Isle last month was named a National Weather Service StormReady campus, making UMPI the second campus in New England and the 21st in the nation to be designated as such. It makes UMPI an integral part of the area's emergency response system. StormReady, established nine years ago, is a nationwide program that helps communities better protect residents during severe weather - from tornadoes to tsunamis to winter storms. Program "communities" can include cities, towns, universities, American Indian tribes or groups, and government and private entities. The program helps equip such communities with the planning, communication and safety skills necessary to save lives and property before and during storms. It also helps community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety and awareness programs. As part of being in StormReady, UMPI has to complete several tasks, such as establishing a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center, and creating a system that monitors weather conditions locally. The university also has to possess more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public, and must promote the importance of public readiness through events such as community seminars. Charles Bonin, vice president of administration and finance at UMPI, expressed excitement that the college was only the second university in New England to receive the designation. "Being a part of this program goes a long way in making us safer as a campus whenever severe weather strikes," he said in a written statement. Greg Daniels, UMPI's security and safety coordinator, and Tony Sturey, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Caribou, have worked with campus, weather and local emergency management officials to meet the StormReady requirements.

Bay Area Regional ERP is introduced (San Francisco Chronicle, 1/4)

Bay Area and state leaders unveiled a plan on Thursday spelling out how emergency responders in the region should communicate and work with each other after an earthquake, a fire, a bomb attack or any major disaster. The 145-page Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, funded by a \$2.2 million DHS grant, also details the role played by the state Office of Emergency Services in coordinating regional responses. The plan - which can be activated in any disaster, whether natural or human-caused - is important because the Bay Area is a business and cultural hub, where dozens of public agencies are expected to cooperate in emergencies, officials said. "Disasters don't know boundaries," San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom said during a press briefing on Treasure Island. He said officials would in the next three months complete nine issue-specific plans covering such topics as transportation and the emergency care and shelter of disaster victims. The plan was developed with URS Corp. of San Francisco. Officials said it will be available in full by Friday on the Web site of the Office of Emergency Services www.oes.ca.gov.

Snow spurs some worry about flooding in NH (New Hampshire Union Leader, 1/4)

At least one Beacon Drive resident is concerned that record snowfall this winter could contribute to devastating flooding in the spring. But a state official notes that while the situation is being monitored, uncertainties abound. "The snowpack is significant in this state," said Steve Doyon, an administrator for the New Hampshire Dam Bureau. "Until we know what's happening in the early spring, we can't say the state is going to be in for it again." Doyon said flooding potential depends on how much water the snowpack retains, the amount of snow and rain that comes in the next few months and the rapidity of spring warming. But based on snowfall so far -- the National Weather Service said the state set a record with 44.5 inches of snowfall in December -- the dam bureau is taking precautions. "We've been drawing down our lakes," Doyon said. "We will create a longer delay before the refilling of the lakes that we draw down, and I'd say we're pretty much staying on course." Doyon said the bureau receives data from snow-sampling stations twice a month to determine the water content and how to adjust the level of lakes appropriately. That effort will be aided by a \$330,000 URS Corp. study of the function of dams to determine whether any changes are necessary before spring. URS Corp. is a global engineering, construction and technical services firm. Doyon said the study will be completed in March and may result in dam operations upstream being adjusted. Even so, some HOW MANY? flood victims on Beacon Drive -- still struggling with insurance agencies and FEMA paperwork stemming from May 2006 and April 2007 storms -- are concerned about prospects of another flood. "This is typically the type of year, quite honestly, that we should be worried about a flood," said Tim Goodridge, who has lived at 16 Beacon Drive for 40 years.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Meeting set on hazard mitigation in Slidell (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/4)

A second public meeting to discuss a major update to Slidell's hazard mitigation plan for improving flood control and drainage facilities will be held Jan. 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council chambers on Bayou Lane. Periodic updates of the plan and annual certifications by FEMA, which oversees the National Flood Insurance Program, are required for the city to continue participation in the insurance program because Slidell is considered a repetitive-loss city. However, officials believe the plan needs a significant overhaul in light of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. City officials and representatives from Beck Disaster Recovery, which is preparing the update, are participating in these sessions, the first of which took place in October. A draft plan will be presented to the public at a third meeting, which has yet to be scheduled, and the final plan will be presented to the City Council in March or April, said City Engineer Donna O'Dell. The update of the plan, which the city initially approved in early 2006, is being financed through a \$150,000 grant -- \$112,500 from the federal government and \$37,500 from the state. The 2006 plan identifies potential disasters that could occur in Slidell and the measures being taken or to be taken to reduce any damage. The biggest risk for this area is flooding, whether by torrential rains or wind-driven storm surge. About 4,500 homes and businesses suffered water or wind damage, especially in south Slidell, when Katrina and its accompanying storm surge from Lake Pontchartrain roared through the city.

La. gets \$5.7 billion for reconstruction work (The Advocate, 1/3)

FEMA has awarded \$9 billion-plus in infrastructure funds to state and local governments along the hurricane-damaged Gulf Coast, including more than \$5.7 billion in Louisiana, the agency said Wednesday. The FEMA Public Assistance funds are being used for a variety of repair and reconstruction projects such as damaged schools, roads, utilities and reconstituting other critical infrastructure. "This is an unprecedented funding level in our nation's history of responding to natural disasters," Gil Jamieson, FEMA's associate deputy administrator for Gulf Coast recovery, said. FEMA has funded more than 72,000 projects in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alabama over the past 27 months to help the rebuilding from hurricanes Katrina and Rita in August and September 2005, respectively, the agency said. Nearly \$4 billion of the more than \$9 billion in infrastructure grants has been provided since the first anniversary of Katrina, including \$1.6 billion obligated in 2007, FEMA said. "The discussions about rebuilding need to shift away from the pace of funding and focus on the bricks and mortar aspect of rebuilding," Jamieson said. FEMA will continue to be "a strong partner with the states and local governments in restoring their communities," he said. FEMA has disbursed \$5.73 billion of the \$9 billion-plus to Louisiana, \$2.35 billion to Mississippi, \$926 million to Texas, and \$112 million to Alabama. Through the Public Assistance Grant Program, FEMA reimburses state and local governments and certain eligible private nonprofit organizations for the actual costs for work required because of a disaster. Eligible projects include damaged roads and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and their contents, publicly owned utilities, and parks and recreation areas. The program includes funds for emergency services and eligible debris removal costs. In addition to the public assistance grants awarded to Louisiana, individual assistance grants totaling more than \$6 billion are being approved and disbursed by FEMA across the state.

FEMA Funds Surpass \$9 Billion for Gulf Coast Recovery (FEMA, 1/2)

Gulf Coast communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are rebuilding with more than \$9 billion in Public Assistance grants provided by FEMA. State and local governments in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are using these FEMA Public Assistance funds for a variety of repair and reconstruction projects, like damaged schools, roads, utilities and reconstituting other critical infrastructure. "This is an unprecedented funding level in our nation's history of responding to natural disasters," said Gil Jamieson, FEMA's Associate Deputy Administrator for Gulf Coast Recovery. Over the past 27 months FEMA has funded over 72,000 projects across these four states. Of the \$9 billion provided to date, nearly \$4 billion has been provided since the 1st anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, including \$1.6 billion obligated in 2007. "The discussions about rebuilding need to shift away from the pace of funding and focus on the bricks and mortar aspect of rebuilding. I'm very pleased that FEMA has been and will continue to be a strong partner with the states and local governments in restoring their communities," Jamieson concluded. Through the Public Assistance Grant Program, FEMA reimburses state and local governments and certain eligible private nonprofit organizations for the actual costs for work required because of the disaster. Eligible projects include damaged roads and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and their contents, publicly owned utilities and parks and recreation areas. The Public Assistance Grant Program also includes funds for emergency services and eligible debris-removal costs related to the disaster. Public Assistance funds disbursed to each state are as follows:

- Alabama - PA funds obligated to state: \$112 million
- Louisiana - PA funds obligated to state: \$5.73 billion
- Mississippi - PA funds obligated to state: \$2.35 billion
- Texas - PA funds paid to state: \$926 million