

Disaster News Update –January 7 to 17, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 11 days)

- **Drought:** Oregon, Nevada, California, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Tennessee
- **Fire:** New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia
- **Flooding / Flash Flooding:** Illinois, Indiana
- **HAZMAT:** Arkansas (Gasoline Leak), Nebraska (Derailed Fuel Tanker)
- **Heavy Rain:** Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois, Tennessee
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Tennessee, Massachusetts, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Washington, Missouri, Oklahoma, California
- **Tornado:** Wisconsin, Washington, Alabama, Missouri

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Nebraska](#): Severe Winter Storm (1/11)
- [Nevada](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (1/8)
- [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

Tropicana and Habitat for Humanity Partner for Gulf (Habitat for Humanity, 1/17)

Tropicana and Habitat for Humanity announced a new, three-year partnership to help build houses along the Gulf Coast and other locations around the country. Through this partnership, Tropicana aims to advance Habitat for Humanity's affordable housing program by committing \$1 million and galvanizing employee volunteers to donate time and funds to help build houses. In 2004-06, Tropicana's employees weathered four hurricanes that criss-crossed the state of Florida and resulted in significant damage to the citrus crop. When Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf coast, Tropicana North America and its employees donated juice and money, and further resolved to aid the affected residents by rebuilding the damaged areas. Tropicana's partnership with Habitat for Humanity International will help rebuild the Coastal area in many ways. In addition to financial contributions, Tropicana will donate nearly 3,500 gallons of juice in the next three years; they will fund the construction of eight homes and send approximately 1,000 volunteers to help build additional homes throughout various Gulf communities. Tropicana employees are also rolling up their sleeves and investing their own "sweat equity" by

participating in home builds as part of PepsiCo's *Performance with Purpose* commitment to sustainable growth, which focuses on generating healthy financial returns while giving back to communities the company serves.

Salvation Army boosts mobile disaster response (Centre Daily Times (PA), 1/17)

A new truck and money to run it are making it easier for the Salvation Army to take its disaster response on the road. The Salvation Army Corps of State College got a mobile canteen from the divisional headquarters that will allow trained **volunteer** teams to hand out food and drinks at emergency situations in Centre County. Teams offer emotional support to disaster survivors and responders too. Capt. Patricia Niedermyer said the State College office also received a gift of \$5,000 a year for the next five years to run it from a donor who wants to remain anonymous. "We think it's going to be a blessing to Centre County in many ways," Niedermyer said. She said the local Salvation Army had been trying to get a mobile canteen for several years. It will help teams of trained emergency disaster volunteers respond to major disasters, such as the collapse of an apartment building parking deck in 2002 or the catastrophic Interstate 80 pileup in 2004. The canteen can also be used for community events, such as parades. It arrived in December and teams gave it a few test runs in December, offering hot chocolate and apple cider where volunteers were ringing Christmas bells for the Salvation Army. It also was part of an emergency training mock search in December. "We're really pleased to have the canteen because it gives us an opportunity to better serve the community," Capt. Chuck Niedermyer said. Patricia Niedermyer said the delivery-truck sized vehicle is a used model. The hope is that if it works out well and is used often, the State College office will be able to get a new one.

Red Cross prepares to cut its national staff (Newark Star Ledger, 1/17)

A \$200 million operating deficit at the American Red Cross is expected to force the agency to cut jobs at its national headquarters, but should not affect the **disaster** relief and other services it provides, according to Red Cross officials in Washington and in New Jersey. A "competitive fund-raising environment" challenged fund-raising efforts, prompting the Red Cross to "refocus our corporate headquarters and reduce our operating budget," said spokeswoman Carrie Martin. In October, the agency began a review of its headquarters operations, projecting a \$150 million deficit for the 2008 fiscal year. The deficit, however, is now estimated at more than \$200 million, according to a message sent to local chapters on Tuesday by acting President Mary S. Elcano. The headquarters employs about 3,000 people, and had an overall budget of \$3.45 billion in 2007. "While no immediate decisions have been made, the situation will require us to restructure our operations at (national headquarters), reduce our annual operating budget and reduce staff," Elcano wrote. "It is important to state at the outset that while there will be changes . . . the mission of the Red Cross has not changed." Decisions on job cuts are expected within about a month, Martin said. Regional service area offices, such as the Northeast office in Massachusetts, could also be affected. "We feel we've gotten a little top-heavy. We're just spending more than we're taking in," Martin said. "Any corporation would tighten its belt when expenses exceed revenue." Officials at some of New Jersey's 18 local chapters said yesterday they were surprised, but the problems should not affect them. "We're seeing it as a national issue for the national office in Washington. It should

not affect our chapter whatsoever," said Diane Concannon, public relations director at the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey in Princeton. The Tri-County Chapter, in Plainfield, provided food and clothing this week for a family of six who were burned out of their apartment. "We have been there for people who require help. We'll continue to be there," said executive director Nathan Rudy.

Katrina volunteers come to stay (USA Today, 1/15)

Since Katrina hit, more than 1 million volunteers have flooded the Gulf Coast -- people giving up weekends, holidays and vacations to do their part in the rebuilding effort. But some have sacrificed much more. John and Mary Mueller, both 58, had a comfortable life in Cape Coral, Fla., where John ran a successful general contracting construction business. They lived in a 2,200-square-foot, five-bedroom house with a swimming pool and three-car garage, the house where, for 21 years, they raised six children. They lost one of their children there, too, a daughter born with abnormal kidneys who died at age 8. In March, they moved into a 208-square-foot trailer in St. Bernard Parish, a sprawling suburb of New Orleans, where they plan to stay until 2009 as regional directors for the Church of the Brethren Disaster Ministries. Although they receive a \$3,000 monthly stipend, it's not enough to maintain their Florida house, so it's up for sale. They have sold or given away most of their belongings, taking only what could fit into the trailer and an 8-by-20-foot cargo trailer parked next to their new home. They also have left behind family and friends in Cape Coral, where they ran a small parish for the Church of the Brethren. Two years after Katrina, the spirit of volunteerism is stronger than ever: 600,000 people headed to the Gulf Coast in Year 2 vs. 550,000 the first year after the August 2005 storm, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that runs AmeriCorps and other volunteer programs. Most are short-termers whose sheer numbers have provided the muscle behind the rebuilding. But the brains are the long-term volunteers who have dedicated at least six months to New Orleans. They provide the expertise needed to direct volunteers to the right work sites, teaching them to drywall and varnish wood. The exact number of long-term volunteers is unknown, but their effect on the rebuilding is not. "We've seen this as the largest volunteer response in American history. There's a huge diversity of volunteers, from retirees to people right out of college," says David Eisner, CEO of the community service agency. "The long-term people are the glue that holds volunteerism together."

Garden clubs mobilize against forest fire devastation (AP, 1/14)

If your image of a garden club is limited to ladies planting azaleas in the town square, think again. The National Garden Clubs Inc., headquartered in St. Louis, is asking its 200,000 members to support a reforestation effort, particularly in areas hard hit by wildfires or other natural disasters. The National Garden Clubs Inc. and the U.S. Forest Service began working together in 2002 to raise money for the Forest Service's Penny Pines program, dedicated to replanting damaged forests. The garden clubs' headquarters is currently making a plea to communities and civic organizations nationwide to pitch in, largely due to the devastation from natural disasters last year. "When you have a club interested in growing things, planting and helping in their communities, it naturally leads to environmental efforts," said Art Loesch, the National Garden Clubs' reforestation and restoration chairman. The Foothill Ranch, Calif., resident sees the fire destruction first

hand, saying land within a half-mile of his own home burned in a wildfire last year. California has about 20 million acres of national forest land, and more than 550,000 acres of it burned in fires last year, said Brenda Kendrix, the Forest Service's Penny Pines coordinator for the Pacific Southwest. Other organizations also contribute to Penny Pines, but she called efforts by those partners a "wonderful" help to reforestation efforts, which extend to other plantings, not just pine trees. To date, the National Garden Clubs have raised at least \$33,000 toward the Penny Pines program through its headquarters. Organizers of the renewed effort said they haven't set a goal for how much they would like to contribute in 2008.

NE State Bill could encourage more emergency workers to help (AP, 1/14)

Trained emergency workers wouldn't have to worry about being sued when helping during the aftermath of disasters, should a new legislative bill get final approval. Under the bill (LB901), volunteer emergency workers would be shielded from liability while helping after disasters, such as tornadoes. State Senator Joel Johnson of Kearney hopes that could encourage more trained emergency workers to help out. Now, the so-called good Samaritan rule applies to people who help others involved in car wrecks and other singular accidents when an official disaster has not been declared. Johnson's bill also would provide liability to emergency workers while they trained for disasters.

Red Cross and HOPE worldwide Partner to Curtail Fires (PR Newswire, 1/14)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will be a day on, not a day off, for many **volunteers** from the American Red Cross and HOPE worldwide. On King Day, and during the weekend preceding the holiday, volunteers in ten cities across America will be walking door-to-door to provide residents with vital preparedness information that will help them prevent and respond to home fires. "Preventing home fires does not require a lot of expensive equipment or training," said Darlene Sparks Washington, director for preparedness at the American Red Cross. "Home fires are America's most common disaster threat, affecting people from all backgrounds and geographic locations. And yet, most home fires are preventable. By working with HOPE worldwide we will be able to reach more people, including an emphasis on vulnerable populations, with vital preparedness information to help them keep their homes safer from fires." Volunteers from the two organizations will distribute fire safety tips in Atlanta, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, Seattle and Washington, D.C. The tips, in English and Spanish, include information for maintaining smoke alarms, using portable heaters safely and cooking safety. Instructions for developing a household fire escape plan and conducting fire escape drills will also be provided. Working under a Memorandum of Understanding, the American Red Cross and HOPE worldwide partner in the areas of blood drive participation, disaster preparedness, and youth and adult programs and services. Earlier this month HOPE worldwide encouraged its more than 20,000 volunteers to become Red Cross blood donors, an effort being made during a time when blood supplies often fall to low levels.

NC Baptists complete project in Gulfport, Miss. (Associated Press, 1/14)

Christmas trees twinkled through the windows of the homes in Gulfport, Miss., this year a welcome sight two years after the state's worst natural disaster. There were more homes

to house those trees too, thanks to the work of N.C. Baptists who descended on this port city in September 2005, and stayed to complete the most ambitious redevelopment project in the organization's history. The "yellow hats," as they've been called in Mississippi, can look back at the past two years with considerable satisfaction. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the North Carolina disaster recovery operation morphed into a housing rehabilitation organization that put more than 700 Mississippi families back into homes. They did so on the strength of volunteers about 30,000 mostly North Carolina men and women who drove 12 hours to help rebuild in the aftermath of the hurricane. This army of volunteers some with construction experience, others with the gift of compassion did what no other federal or state agency was able to: rip up damaged homes and rehabilitate them from the studs. "There's no organization that's received more respect and appreciation than N.C. Baptist Men," said the Rev. Chuck Register, pastor of First Baptist Church of Gulfport. "They've not only built 700 homes, they've put 700 families back together." For two years, the Gulfport Amory, with its 40-foot-by-65-foot warehouse for building materials, served as home base for the volunteers who in the first year of the project averaged 300 people a week. Here they ate, showered and slept on bunk beds, waking before dawn each morning to go out and work on homes.

Disaster relief trailer for pets to aid evacuations in Alabama (AP, 1/14)

It happened time and again during Hurricane Katrina: Animal owners refused to evacuate their homes or remained in flooded or wrecked property afterward because emergency shelters refused to accept their pets. Humane Society and Jefferson County emergency response officials in Alabama say new equipment they received Monday should help ease that problem in future disasters. Using a federal grant, planners with the organizations have purchased a 24-foot trailer and are equipping it with cages, leashes, basic medicines, animal food and bowls to provide a way to care for animals statewide after hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and other disasters. With a total cost of about \$80,000, the trailer can be taken to disaster scenes and parked at shelters to care for the pets of people forced from their homes. Officials hope the trailer will remove a reason that previously kept many people from going to a shelter during an approaching storm. "If you watched the video on CNN (during Katrina) of them plucking people off roofs, it was amazing how many had pets with them," said Dr. Charles Hart, a veterinarian who helped with the project. The trailer will be based in Jefferson County but will be available for use elsewhere, said Hart, of Clay. Hart said the problem of caring for pets after a disaster first became evident when Hurricane Ivan struck the Alabama coast in 2004, but Katrina showed its true extent. Bob Ammons of the Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency said the trailer, which will be operated by Humane Society workers, will be capable of caring for 80 pets at a time. FEMA provided the grant. Ann Haden of the Greater Birmingham Humane Society said the rig will even be able to help care for larger animals like cows and horses during more common incidents like livestock haulers breaking down or getting into roadway accidents. "It is equipped so it will allow trainer personnel to rescue both large animals and companion animals if a need arises," she said.

Coast Guard seeks Auxiliary volunteers (Star Ledger, 1/10)

Bold Stephen Gillooly has a day job as a management consultant. But after hours he swaps his business suit for Coast Guard garb for duty as a medic, leaving the dock to

render first aid to boaters in need. Gillooly, 41, of Franklin Township, is one of thousands across the country who serve in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, a volunteer agency that aids the regular Coast Guard in all its missions except law enforcement and military action. "For geeks like me, getting to do all these things is an absolute blast," said Gillooly, who originally became an EMT with his local ambulance squad. His service with the Coast Guard has included serving aboard an ice breaker on the Hudson River. If you want to get in on the action, the Coast Guard wants you. It is currently seeking volunteers to join the auxiliary ranks. Auxiliary services include safety patrols, homeland security duties, watching for pollution issues, search and rescue, conducting boating safety checks and teaching boating safety courses. Auxiliary members patrol in uniform using their own boats flying the Coast Guard Auxiliary flag. They are reimbursed for operating costs. They also assist with duties such as Web design, information technology, public affairs and other administrative duties. "We bring an unusual mix of experience to the Coast Guard," Gillooly said.

Volunteers Warm Hearts After Ice Storm (DNN Volunteer Network, 1/9)

Churches are helping people in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri cope with problems created by last month's ice storm. In Oklahoma -- one of the states most heavily damaged -- the Dec. 9-10 storm knocked out electricity to more than 600,000 homes and business and contributed to the deaths of nearly 30 people. One of the worst natural disasters to hit the state in years, the storm also caused millions of dollars in damage to homes, cars and other property. Life is getting back to normal now for many who suffered losses from the storm, including Bill and Betty Guest, a retired Oklahoma City couple. Ice and snow weighed down trees in their yard and two large branches fell on their driveway. "The branches didn't damage our car much," says Betty Guest, "but they blocked the driveway. We were stuck in the house for two days because we couldn't get the car out." The Guests hired a commercial tree service to remove the large branches and clear a path for their car, but they still had problems. Several other branches were cracked and it appeared that winds -- gusting up to 60 mph -- were about to break them. "We were worried a little about the damage they might do if they fell on the house," says Betty, "but we were worried a lot more about the damage they might do to the people in the house."

Rebuilding One House At A Time (Disaster News Network, 1/9)

Loye Kemp was hoping for some downtime to finish some paperwork the day after Christmas. Kemp, the construction superintendent for Lutheran Social Services in Port Arthur, Texas, thought he'd have a quiet day to catch up on some administrative chores as he tries to help those still affected by the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. Other staff members were home for the holidays, and for a day he was hoping for some much needed time to keep his paperwork on track. But then he got a call from the police about a widow with 10 children, whose home still suffers from roof and foundation problems brought on by the hurricane, which slammed into the coast more than two years ago. "It has been two years later, and she has not received any help," said Kemp, a retired building inspector in Port Arthur. Kemp turned the call over to a caseworker, who will process the widow's need for help to a construction crew. "Sooner or later (we will help her)," said Kemp. "I'm still working on it." As federal funds wait to be distributed,

members of the Southeast Texas Interfaith Organization (SETIO) are trying to help homeowners in the Port Arthur and Beaumont areas keep a solid foundation under buildings and a roof over their heads.

NV Flooding Brings Town Together (Disaster News Network, 1/7)

Saturday's levee break in Fernley, NV, sent hundreds fleeing from their homes in a two mile area near the Truckee Canal, but the resulting flood brought the community together. Pastor Paul Theiss of the Gift of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fernley said he has seen a new trait emerge in a community with few social ties as residents came together to help those in need. "We're a boom town. Really, all of Nevada is like that, people come here to work and there are not a lot of roots to the communities here," the pastor said. "It has taken something like this to bring everything together. I have been amazed to see that everyone is putting everything on hold to help those in need." On Saturday, a 30-foot breach in a levee along the Truckee Canal sent water cascading across a two square mile area, leaving at least 200 homes with severe flooding damage and initially forcing hundreds of people from their homes. Many local residents do not have flood insurance. The city of about 20,000 residents sits about 30 miles east of Reno. Theiss said it is a fast growing and constantly changing community. He said there is a rich history in the area, but many of the current residents are relative newcomers. The pastor said most of the 50 or so members of his church, which is located at the crossroads of town, have been to the church to do something or to make a financial donation to help those whose homes were damaged in Saturday's flooding. "Everyone is doing what they can," he said.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Course aims to train wilderness responders (Bangor Daily News, 1/16)

Acadia National Park and Acadia Partners for Science and Learning will hold a hands-on Wilderness First Responder course April 14-21, at the Schoodic Education and Research Center. The intensive backcountry medical training course will show students how to deal with medical emergencies when they are miles from help and dialing 911 is not an option. The course is recommended for all outdoor professionals and enthusiasts who spend time in remote areas. Graduates will be certified by Wilderness Medical Associates. For tuition and logistical information, call Michelle Bierman at 288-1326.

Hospital to Host Community Emergency Preparedness Fair (Business Wire, 1/14)

Valley Presbyterian Hospital (VPH) will host an all-hazards Emergency Preparedness Fair to bring first-responders together with the community at large. The first annual fair, at the hospital campus on Thursday, Jan. 24, will feature a decontamination tent. Sponsors include the Los Angeles Department of Health, ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service), Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Fire Department, Los Angeles County volunteer organizations, hazardous materials crews, and suppliers of safety equipment. "Valley Presbyterian Hospital is a leader in community safety," said President and Chief Executive Officer Albert L. Greene. "Valley Pres was one of the first medical centers to comply with earthquake safety regulations by building a seismically

compliant 188-bed patient tower four years ago. We continue to invest in safety by purchasing 'disaster preparedness' equipment, staff training, and inviting the community to learn more about being prepared." The Emergency Preparedness Fair is a free public event that will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the north parking lot of the hospital campus. In addition to the sponsors, attendees include representatives from Los Angeles Emergency Management Services Agency, Van Nuys Neighborhood Council, Van Nuys and LAX airports, students from nearby Columbus Avenue Elementary School, neighboring residents and businesspeople.

Radios given out for weather alerts in Saline Co. (AR) (AR Democrat Gazette, 1/12)
After a tornado struck within a stone's throw of their home in the early 1980s, Griffin and Fern Arless built a storm shelter. On Thursday, they took another step in preparing for the worst: an emergency weather radio. They will be one of about 517 homeowners in Saline County to receive a county-issued radio under a program implemented last summer using funds from a voluntary tax. It is believed to be the first program of its kind in Arkansas. The radios sound whenever NOAA issues a severe-weather warning. Any Saline County resident can get one, even if he opted not to pay the \$5 voluntary tax. The option is available when residents pay their personal property taxes. So far about \$20,000 has been raised, and another \$10,000 was appropriated from county general funds to get radios in homes starting last summer. Participation in the communities where the radios have been distributed is inching close to 50 percent, said County Judge Lanny Fite. County officials are distributing radios to residents by fire districts as part of a plan to phase out the Cold War-era sirens that are expensive to fix and out of earshot for many of the county's more than 94,000 residents. With Tuesday's deadly tornado that struck Pope and Conway counties fresh in people's minds, turnout in the Lonsdale community this week has been high, said Laurie Shepard, deputy director of Saline County's Office of Emergency Management. She said about 115 people showed up Tuesday at the Ten Mile Missionary Baptist Church to get the radios, which retail for about \$30. An additional 73 picked up the radios Thursday. Lonsdale is the third fire district to get the radios. Now, it's on to Traskwood and possibly the Sardis area. But there will be no more distributions until more funds are generated, Fite said. He said the county will no longer repair broken sirens in areas where radios have already been given out. The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management favors radios over sirens, said spokesman Tommy Jackson. But the department doesn't keep track of how many people might have the radios or if any other local jurisdiction is distributing them.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Removal of rural debris a long, costly struggle (Tulsa World, 1/17)

Despite limited resources and manpower, many rural areas continue to slowly but gradually remove hundreds of tons of broken limbs and debris left from last month's ice storm. In some areas, such as northern Rogers County, the devastation still is hard to fathom, Rogers County Commissioner Mike Helm said. "You get out in the county and around the (Oologah) lake area, we have thousands, hundreds of thousands of trees. People put their houses in the middle of that." Workers are using shears attached to heavy

equipment to remove limbs that are dangling over county roads. The shears are able to reach 30 feet high and cut limbs up to 2 feet thick. Workers are scheduled to spend roughly the next four weeks in the Oologah area before moving south to the Collinsville and Owasso areas. "We're looking at somewhere close to June before it's all wrapped up," Helm said. Helm estimated that the cost of debris removal and management will be between \$12 million and \$14 million in his district alone. "We just don't know how long it's going to take," he said. "What really worries me is that if we get another torrential rain like we had last summer, a lot of this debris that's down in creeks and waterways is going to get clogged, causing more flooding." Mayes County Commissioner Larry Ramsey said his workers were still repairing roads damaged by last summer's flooding when the ice storm hit. The damage is worst in the western part of the county, he said. The eastern part of the county was the hardest hit in the January 2007 ice storm.

Flooded areas of northern Indiana named disaster area (Associated Press, 1/17)

The Red Cross has named parts of northwest Indiana a national-level disaster area after last week's floods destroyed hundreds of homes and displaced thousands of residents. Debbie Elsner, executive director of Tippecanoe County Red Cross, said the declaration would allow more than 50 volunteers from across the country to reinforce the local agency's efforts. The volunteers will help with recovery efforts in the 17-county region, with headquarters at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette. Elsner said the volunteers have different specialties, from administrative functions to disaster health care. They will work with the region's nine local ARC chapters to help flood victims with short-term recovery efforts. State officials on Wednesday had begun assessing damage in the areas where the waters have receded, said Pam Bright, spokeswoman for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. The state will decide whether to apply for federal disaster help after assessors calculate how many homes were destroyed or had major or minor damage, she said. "We most likely are going to apply," she said. Three people, including two children, died on Jan. 8 during the flooding across much of northern Indiana. Hundreds of homes were damaged, mostly in rural counties between Lafayette and South Bend. White and Carroll counties were among the worst hit. Water levels in the Tippecanoe River, which feeds the Wabash, have dropped, and many residents have begun assessing whether they can rebuild.

Flood teams assess extent of damage (The Pantagraph (IL), 1/16)

State and federal officials joined together Tuesday to survey the damage done after last week's Vermilion River flood. The river flooded Wednesday, sending water into homes and basements by the foot and forcing hundreds of people to evacuate. The river has since returned to normal levels, but the process of determining the level of state and federal aid has just begun. Officials from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency will be joined by others from FEMA and the U.S. SBA in making assessments. Two teams will be dispatched to Central Illinois, one to Pontiac and one to Watseka; each area has been declared a disaster area. IEMA officials are continuing a preliminary survey that began Monday, said agency spokeswoman Maggie Carson. "Generally what they are looking at is the extent of the damage, such as are there total home losses, or significant damage," she said. "There could be several homes with major damage or minor damage, so they will gauge the severity of that damage and then decide whether or not to request

federal aid." After the assessment is completed, officials will decide whether to apply for federal aid. President Bush must approve any federal aid, which can come in the form of grants or loans for home repair. The SBA will oversee distribution of any financial aid to businesses. Meanwhile, school resumed Tuesday for about 300 students who attend Washington Elementary School, after nearly a week of unexpected vacation because of the flood damage. District 429 Superintendent Steve Graham said teachers and students were excited to return to class.

FEMA denies individual aid (Tulsa World, 1/16)

The federal government has denied Oklahoma's request for individual assistance for Tulsa and Oklahoma counties in the wake of a December ice storm that crippled the state and caused millions of dollars in damage, Gov. Brad Henry's office announced Tuesday. Henry said he was deeply disappointed and frustrated that FEMA denied the request. "I don't understand how FEMA could assess the extensive damages from that ice storm and not conclude the obvious," Henry said. "This was a storm of historic proportions that caused damage to both public property and private property." The governor is expected to enlist the help of the state's congressional delegation in appealing the decision. The state will be required to provide additional information in its appeal, said Michelann Ooten of the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management. Individual assistance covers uninsured housing repair or temporary housing costs, Small Business Administration low-interest loans to individuals or businesses to repair or replace damaged property, disaster unemployment assistance, and grants for serious needs and necessary expenses not met by other programs. With \$4,000 out of pocket and still more damage to clean up, Edward Hooker, a Tulsa homeowner, was counting on FEMA for a financial lifeline. "Our hopes were raised," Hooker said. "And now I wish nobody had ever said anything about it. It's disappointing, of course." Nearly 13,000 people reported uninsured damages to state officials. But that number doesn't include Hooker himself -- and, presumably, thousands of other homeowners like him -- because he wasn't able to get through to the state's hot line or Web site to file a report.

Boston 'HUB' Weathers First '08 Storm (Boston Herald, 1/15)

The first storm of 2008 dumped 8 to 14 inches of snow across Massachusetts yesterday and packed powerful winds that toppled trees, knocked out power to 45,000 homes and created frustrating travel delays for countless commuters. At times, the early-morning nor'easter smacked Boston and its suburbs with blinding gusts of snow, leaving the largest accumulations north and west of the city. It forced 600 schools to cancel classes, and Boston officials said they towed more than 450 cars to clear the streets for plows. Still, the storm did not paralyze the region like last month's icy downburst, when tens of thousands of motorists were trapped on unplowed state highways for six hours and longer after Gov. Deval Patrick's call for state and private employees to leave work early put everyone on the road at the same time. Yesterday, city and state officials urged workers to stay put or use public transportation. The storm was gone by 1 p.m., leaving the region with a blanket of snow that created irritation, but not chaos. There were no reports of fatalities or serious injuries. State police fielded continual reports of spinouts, including a Logan Express bus that lost control on Interstate 93 north in Medford, but there were no large-scale emergencies. In Boston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino mandated all nonessential

employees to stay home and canceled school. He declared a snow emergency that forced residents to move their cars from major thoroughfares. Those who did not were ticketed or towed. At last count, officials said more than 3,060 tickets had been issued, each one carrying a \$35 fine.

More than 100 seek flood help (The Pantagraph, 1/14)

Although flood waters have receded, American Red Cross of The Heartland volunteers continued to provide much-needed help Sunday to all of those affected by the flood. Volunteers met with more than 100 people Sunday in the first day of operation of their service delivery center located at the Pontiac City Hall Council Chambers, 115 W. Howard St, Pontiac. They helped dispense items including clean-up kits with mops, brooms, buckets and other cleaning supplies. People affected by the flood may come to the center where casework volunteers will be on hand to meet individually with families to assess their immediate basic needs, such as medications, food, and clothing. Health Services volunteers are available to address health issues. Mental health volunteers are also available for counseling. Residents throughout the flood-affected areas were busy over the weekend cleaning out water-damaged homes, and garbage piles outside homes were common sights. Meanwhile, the National Weather Service said the Vermilion River stood at 9.3 feet Sunday afternoon. While the weather service records the official crest of the river as 18.81 feet about 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, city officials say it reached 19.5 feet, breaking the 1982 record of 19.2 feet. A shelter is being provided at the Pontiac Parks and Recreation Building, 900 N. Elm St., in the northeast part of town, providing a place for people displaced from their homes to stay. Sleeping cots, meals, clothing and other necessities will be provided by the chapter volunteers. Mike McKnight, director of disaster response for the Heartland Chapter, said that the shelter can accommodate up to 30 people, but was unsure how many were using the facility Sunday night. A total of 1,135 meals have been served and 600 cleanup kits have been dispensed by 22 volunteers since the Pontiac disaster response began. As of Sunday, about 400 mobile meals have been served out of the chapter's Emergency Response Vehicle to people who have returned to their homes.

FEMA field office to help Fernley flood victims (Associated Press, 1/14)

FEMA is opening a field office in Fernley to help hundreds of victims of a flood caused when an earthen irrigation canal failed on Jan. 5. President Bush declared the area a national disaster last week after Gov. Jim Gibbons estimated initial repair and cleanup costs approaching \$4 million and climbing. Nearly 300 homes were damaged. "The flood victims in Fernley need as much help as possible to get their homes and lives back," said Rep. Dean Heller, R-Nev., who asked FEMA to set up the field office to assist in federal relief. "After touring the flood area with Mayor (Todd) Cutler and speaking with flood victims, local outreach is critical to ensuring that every person who lost their home gets the assistance they need. I am pleased FEMA has authorized this field office," he said Monday. The FEMA field office at the Fernley City Hall will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

Hundreds brave snow, mud to clean up tornado damage (AP, 1/14)

Cleanup efforts from last week's tornado in Kenosha County were supposed to be

postponed this weekend because of weather. But hundreds of volunteers turned out anyway, pitching in to help rebuild homes and lives. "It's been incredible, just constant all day long," said Debbie Colletti, who helped coordinate relief efforts for storm victims. "I guess the cleanup kind of happened anyway," she said. The town of Wheatland was ground zero for the rare winter twisters Jan. 7 that leveled more than two dozen homes and damaged nearly 80 others. The damage was estimated at \$18 million, according to the Kenosha County Division of Emergency Management. The tornadoes hit hardest in the town of Wheatland near Twin Lakes, just north of the Illinois border. They also caused damage on the north side of Kenosha. Remarkably, there were no deaths and only minor to moderate injuries. Authorities had originally postponed cleanup efforts because of snow cover and muddy fields. But more than 600 people still showed up Saturday. Even with the Red Cross and Salvation Army on hand, Colletti and friend Kandi Horton have set up a community-based team of volunteers to dispense food, clothing, household goods and toiletries to affected families. All the products have been donated by individuals and companies. "The first day we were here, Wal-Mart called and said they were sending a truckload down in a couple of hours," Colletti said. "Iris in Pleasant Prairie sent a truckload of storage bins." "The generosity has been overwhelming," Horton added. "We've had support from everywhere, from Milwaukee and Waukesha to Illinois." Out in the fields, hundreds of volunteers sifted through debris.

Picking Up Pieces After MS Twisters (Disaster News Network, 1/13)

Volunteers helped survivors pick up the shattered pieces of their lives Saturday and Sunday following tornadoes and severe thunderstorms that raked across more than 100 miles of central and northern Mississippi Thursday. More than 100 homes were damaged or destroyed in Caledonia where the storm also ripped apart the local Church of Christ and damaged a United Methodist Church. Although about half of the town of approximately 1,000, was damaged no one was critically injured. Noting the twister struck about 30 minutes before school was scheduled to be dismissed, local officials said it could have been much worse. None of the 1,800 pupils who attend the K-12 school were seriously hurt, but it was a near miss -- the school's gymnasium was destroyed and an empty schoolbus that was to have been used to take students home was deposited onto the roof of an old gym on the school grounds. Winds from the twisters reached at least 140 mph in some locations and initially knocked out power to more than 1,000 homes, primarily in Attala, Holmes and Lowndes Counties. Farmers in the region also reported significant damage to livestock and outbuildings. At least two homes were also reported to be destroyed in Sulligent, AL, near the MS line according to the National Weather Service.

5 counties named as disaster areas (Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 1/12)

Gov. Mike Beebe on Friday declared five counties state disaster areas because of storm damage earlier this week. The declaration for Pope, Conway, Benton, Poinsett and Craighead counties allows the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management to use \$250,000 from the governor's disaster fund to assist residents. Starting Monday, residents may apply for assistance by calling the department at (877) 828-3362 or their local offices of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. A Pope County man, Billy Carter, 61, died Tuesday when a tornado struck his doublewide mobile home just outside

Appleton. Beebe's office said in a statement Friday that a disaster recovery center will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and Sunday at the Appleton Community Center to offer on-site assistance to tornado victims. Representatives from Emergency Management, Human Services, the Arkansas Insurance Department, and the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration will be there, along with crisis counselors.

Hundreds of IN Homes Damaged (Disaster News Network, 1/12)

Streams and rivers are still rising in parts of Indiana where many hundreds of homes have been seriously damaged or destroyed in what weather observers are calling more than a 100-year flood. Although damage assessments will continue into next week, Gov. Mitch Daniels said Friday Indiana will ask for a Federal Disaster Declaration for "a very wide area of the state." Repeat flooding Friday forced some residents who had begun to clean up, out of their homes again. "We couldn't get some places on Friday where we had been the day before," said the Rev. Todd Ladd, pastor of Delphi United Methodist Church in Carroll County. Ladd said volunteers planned to continue to help flood survivors Saturday as they returned to their homes. As the water began to recede in some areas faith-based organizations were planning their response. More than 500 flood buckets with cleaning supplies were distributed by United Methodist volunteers in Indiana Friday and Saturday and meetings were held Friday in Delphi and Monticello near some of the heaviest damage.

Navajo communities deal with snow, mud (Deseret Morning News, 1/12)

The Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management and other resources are on standby while eight Navajo communities deal with recovery issues related to snowmelt. The communities all declared emergencies this week because of muddy road conditions resulting from recent snowfall, along with Apache County, Ariz. The impacted Navajo communities are Klagetoh, Inscription House, Wide Ruins, Belabito, Crystal, Sawmill, Black Mesa and Navajo Mountain. The Navajo Nation Department of Transportation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, chapters and Apache County have all been plowing snow-packed paved roads.

Barbour declares state of emergency following Thursday storm (AP, 1/12)

A state of emergency for the residents in counties, including Attala, Choctaw, Holmes and Lowndes, affected by Thursday's severe weather, the governor's office announced Friday. "This will ensure the residents of these counties will receive the assistance they need," Gov. Haley Barbour said in a statement. In addition to widespread property damage, the weather also is being blamed for at least two traffic fatalities. A Mississippi Highway Patrol spokesman said the vehicles involved in both crashes may have hydroplaned during downpours, though investigations are continuing. To the north, about 100 houses were damaged and destroyed and 11 people were injured in Lowndes County. Two were hospitalized with injuries that didn't appear to be life threatening. Cindy Lawrence, the Columbus-Lowndes County emergency management director, said children were placed in a hall at the K-12 school in Caledonia when high winds tossed a bus on top of the gym and also destroyed the vocational building and several cars in the parking lot. Two students were injured, Lowndes County Superintendent Mike Halford said. "If we had ignored the warning and not brought those students into the hallways,

there would have been students in those buildings," Halford said. "If it wasn't for the faculty and students following our emergency plan, it could have been a lot worse." "Best way to sum it up is an awful lot destruction and no deaths," said Caledonia Mayor Bill Lawrence said Friday as he surveyed the aftermath of a tornado that ripped through the Lowndes County town of 1,015. The preliminary estimate in Lowndes County is 25 houses were destroyed, 22 suffered major damage and 59 had minor damage, according to the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Also, one business was destroyed, two had major damage and two had minor damage, MEMA reported. In all 11 people were injured three serious enough to go to the hospital but none with life-threatening injuries. Management Deputy Director Dwain Steed said a tornado touched down at least three times in the county.

Heavy rain, perhaps a tornado pound Ky. (Associated Press, 1/12)

Storm damage to parts of south-central Kentucky could total more than \$500,000, official estimated. Officials with the National Weather Service were on the scene Friday, trying to determine whether the destruction Thursday was the result of a tornado or straight-line winds. Weather officials believe it may have been a rain-wrapped tornado, a rare phenomenon that can obscure the radar reading of a tornado. The storms left a path of debris in Barren and surrounding counties, knocking over trees and damaging buildings. Barren County Emergency Management Director Tony Richey says preliminary damage estimates for the county total more than a half-million dollars. Cave City resident Steve Nichols' mobile home was ripped apart as he, his sister, his nephew and his nephew's girlfriend huddled in the hallway. Nichols says he lost everything, but the important thing was that his family and pets are safe.

Damage 'guestimate' up to \$18 million after SE Wis. tornadoes (AP, 1/11)

The damage estimate hit \$18 million Thursday from the tornadoes that smashed through Kenosha County, demolishing more than two dozen homes and damaging nearly 80 others. County Emergency Management officials released the damage estimate that they acknowledged was based on using property and assessment records and "best guestimates." The tornadoes Monday afternoon hit hardest in the town of Wheatland near Twin Lakes just north of the Illinois border, but they also caused damage on the north side of Kenosha. Only minor injuries were reported. According to the figures released Thursday: 27 homes and buildings were destroyed. Another 32 homes sustained major damage. 46 homes had minor damage. The information from Emergency Management Director Ben Schliesman said nearly \$1 million in additional damage and costs have been sustained by municipalities as they responded to the disaster. "We are trying to get a handle on how many homes are uninsured or underinsured," Schliesman said. Officials urged property owners to call to report uninsured damages to the county so that they can be included in the total estimate, for use in applying for state and federal disaster relief. Cleanup efforts and repair work continued at the storm scene Thursday, while volunteers collected donated jackets, clothes and other items for those who need them.

President Declares Major Disaster For Nebraska (FEMA, 1/11)

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

during the period of December 10-12, 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 storm in Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson and Thayer 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 as 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.

Powerful storms slam Mississippi, Alabama; Illinois (Associated Press, 1/11)

Powerful thunderstorms packing heavy rain and high winds pushed across Alabama and Mississippi, causing scattered property damage and at least two traffic deaths. In Alabama's Lamar County near the Mississippi line, at least two houses were destroyed in Sulligent, the National Weather Service said. In nearby Vernon, rescuers freed a woman who was pinned in her vehicle after a tree fell on it, said Don Dollar, an administrative assistant with the city. She was taken to a hospital, but her condition was not available Thursday afternoon. Just across the state line, buildings and buses were damaged at a school in Caledonia, Miss., said Lea Stokes, a spokeswoman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. To the southwest in Choctaw County, one woman was injured and barns at a large dairy farm were heavily damaged during the peak of the storms. The severe weather shut down many schools, including the University of Alabama and the University of North Alabama. In east-central Illinois, meanwhile, days of springlike weather that brought heavy rainfall and melting snow caused severe flooding that forced hundreds of people to evacuate. Floodwaters were as deep as 6 feet in Watseka, where residents left about 235 homes. Fire Chief David Mayotte said officials used a dozen boats to rescue about 535 residents, plus 75 pets, starting shortly after midnight Wednesday and continuing into Thursday morning. "Most of the people who have lived here a long time say it's the worst flooding they've seen," said Carl Gerdovich, director of the Iroquois County Emergency Service Disaster Agency. Floodwaters in the area were dropping Thursday. Watseka residents Tracy Hendry and her two daughters spent Wednesday night at Trinity Church. Hendry sent her daughters to stay with relatives on Thursday, but planned to sleep there a second night. She said she recently moved out of her house and her belongings were stored in her mother's garage, which was knee-high in water Thursday. Gov. Rod Blagojevich declared state disaster areas in Iroquois County and Livingston County, where about 200 homes were evacuated when the Vermilion River went over its banks. In Vancouver, Wash., a rare tornado touched down Thursday in a residential area, downing power lines, uprooting trees and tossing shopping carts into cars. There were no reports of injuries, fire department spokesman Jim Flaherty said.

President declares Nevada flood zone disaster area (Associated Press, 1/9)

President Bush declared part of northern Nevada a national disaster area Tuesday, making federal relief available to victims of flooding that damaged hundreds of homes. Bush signed the disaster declaration as building inspectors went door to door in the town of Fernley to assess millions of dollars of damage from the flood caused by a break in a century-old irrigation canal early Saturday about 30 miles east of Reno. The declaration makes available federal assistance including grants for temporary housing and home repairs, the White House press office said. It also can be used to make low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the disaster. Gov. Jim Gibbons declared the area a disaster on Saturday. His request to the White House for the national declaration included initial repair and cleanup estimates approaching \$4 million, and indicated that follow-up assessments could push that total higher. Gibbons praised Bush for his prompt response. "This federal funding will begin providing immediate assistance to Fernley residents whose homes sustained damage during the flood," he said. R. David Paulison, FEMA administrator, named Michael L. Karl as the federal coordinating officer for the federal recovery operations in the area. The White House said FEMA may issue additional disaster designations if requested by the state and warranted by further damage estimates.

US Dept. of Labor Announces \$2.2M for OH Recovery (States News, 1/9)

The U.S. Department of Labor announced a \$2,199,600 grant, with \$1,084,000 released initially, to the state of Ohio to help create temporary jobs to aid cleanup and recovery efforts resulting from recent storms and flooding in the state. This \$2.2 million grant will provide dislocated Ohio workers with jobs aiding in the cleanup and reconstruction of waterways and repairing other property damage that communities suffered in the storms, said U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. On Sept. 11, 2007, FEMA declared the Ohio counties of Allen, Crawford, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Richland and Wyandot eligible for FEMA' public assistance program. Of these counties, Crawford, Hancock and Putnam have been targeted by the state to receive assistance through this grant. The grant announced today was awarded to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and will provide workers affected by the recent storms with temporary jobs on projects related to the cleanup and reconstruction of destroyed waterways and lands within the affected communities. Cleanup projects are also being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure operations adhere to policies designed to prevent the destabilization of stream banks and waterways. National Emergency Grants are part of the secretary of labor' discretionary fund and are awarded based on a state' ability to meet specific guidelines.

Guard Providing Relief in Nevada Flooding (AP, 1/9)

Nevada Sen. Harry Reid inspected the flooded town of Fernely, Nev., in an Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Monday and requested President George Bush declare the Fernley flood a disaster, making home and business owners and the town eligible for federal aid. A joint effort among three military services provided some quick relief for Fernley flood victims over the weekend. The Nevada National Guard delivered more than 93,000 Meals Ready to Eat, or MREs, to the North Lyon Fire District's fire station Sunday after picking up the rations at Fallon Naval Air Station.

Three U.S. Coast Guard C-130 transport planes picked up the MREs at Moffitt Field near San Jose, Calif., and flew them to NAS Fallon to await the 45-minute drive to Fernley. "Each pallet contained 2,304 MREs," said Lt. Mike Woodrum, operations officer with Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento. The Nevada Army Guard's 593rd Transportation Company based out of the Washoe County Armory north of Reno was tasked with the ground transportation. Staff Sgt. Patrick Marshall, convoy commander, was one of about 40 Soldiers and Airmen activated on state active duty orders to assist Fernley residents. "All of our Soldiers volunteered for this mission," Marshall said. About 800 homes and business were hit by the flood. Waters are draining but rose to eight feet in places.

President Declares Major Disaster For Nevada (FEMA, 1/8)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Nevada to help people and communities recover from the effects of severe winter storms and flooding beginning on January 5, 2008, and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for the state by President Bush. Paulison said that the President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Lyon 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 organization on a cost-sharing basis for Lyon County. In addition, federal funding is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Michael L. Karl as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Karl said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

US Dept. of Labor announces \$2.1M for Washington recovery (States News, 1/8)

The U.S. Department of Labor today announced a \$2,141,700 grant, with \$713,900 released initially, to the state of Washington to help create temporary jobs to aid in cleanup and recovery efforts resulting from recent storms in the state. "This more than \$2 million grant will provide jobs to dislocated workers assisting in the cleanup and recovery efforts in Washington," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "Funds from the grant may also be used for humanitarian projects making shelter, food and clothing available to disaster victims." On Dec. 8, 2007, FEMA declared the Washington counties of Grays Harbor, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Thurston eligible for FEMA's Public Assistance Program. The grant, awarded to the Washington State Employment Security Department, will provide workers affected by the recent storms with temporary jobs on projects related to the cleanup, demolition, repair, renovation and reconstruction of destroyed public structures, facilities and lands within the affected communities. Funds will also be used for projects that provide food, clothing, shelter and other types of humanitarian assistance for disaster victims. Funding may also be used to provide job-training services for participating workers who are not able to return to permanent employment following the completion of temporary jobs.

CA Storm damage in the millions (Chico Enterprise Record, 1/8)

Initial reviews estimate Friday's storm caused at least \$2.7 million in damages to public and private property in Chico, according to city officials. Fire Chief Steve Brown said once the final tallies come in, the physical damage caused by severe wind and rain would likely be around \$3 million. Butte County puts losses to its government facilities at \$100,000. There is no estimate of private property losses yet, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared the county a disaster area Monday. Chico Finance Director Jennifer Hennessy said the city is in the process of "trying to capture" all costs related to the storm in case it will be eligible for state or federal aid. The city hopes to know by the end of the week storm costs from the street crews and emergency crews out working overtime during the weekend and the minor costs from the extra supplies such as chain saw fuel, she said. Brown said while the city has completed an initial review of the damage and will continue to refine those numbers, it's not tracking the losses to private businesses that lost power and the economic losses to the city are unknown. Brown said most of the damage citywide was to roofs or sidewalks ruptured by the roots of toppling trees. He said damage to city rights-of-way, structures and sidewalks is estimated at \$30,000 so far. Hennessy said officials in the city's Building Services Department are reporting that damage to homes appears to be less costly than the deductible a homeowner would pay to their insurance company. She said that likely means much of the damage will not get reported to insurance companies, although she said that will be up to the individual homeowner to decide whether or not to submit a claim.

Volunteers pitch in at tornado-damaged homes, farms (Associated Press, 1/8)

Homeowners and emergency workers cleaned up damaged property in northern Illinois Tuesday, one day after a rare January tornado cut a 13-mile path through houses, a dairy farm and an apple orchard that catered to tourists. At least three homes were leveled in Boone County, where four people were hurt, including one woman who was in critical condition with head injuries at a Rockford hospital. A veterinarian was called to stitch up the wounds of dairy cows. "It looked horrible. It was extremely sad to see," said Sandra Rogers, Boone County's emergency management coordinator, after flying over a two-mile stretch where the tornado touched down. "You can see big groupings of trees and, all of sudden, in the middle of them, they're mowed down," Rogers said. Multiple buildings were destroyed at the Edwards Apple Orchard in Poplar Grove, which draws city visitors each autumn who want to pick their own fruit. The orchard owners were inspecting their trees for damage, Rogers said. A county building inspector was looking at storm-damaged homes and up to seven might be declared uninhabitable, Rogers said. Volunteers cleared debris and covered exposed sides of houses with tarps where the tornado had ripped off walls, she said. Eight restaurants donated hundreds of meals to crews working on the cleanup, said American Red Cross spokesman Cedric Johnson. The Red Cross found a hotel room for one family whose home was destroyed by a tornado in Poplar Grove. The National Weather Service sent two survey crews to map the tornado's path and found a trail of destruction 100 yards wide and 13.2 miles long. Meteorologist Mark Rutzer said the tornado touchdown lasted 18 minutes, beginning at 3:30 p.m. in Boone County near Poplar Grove and speeding northeast into McHenry County northeast of Harvard.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Bird Flu Risk May Have Been Overblown (MSNBC, 1/10)

Fears of a flu pandemic originating from the deadly H5N1 bird flu virus were overblown, the head of the World Organization for Animal Health said Thursday. The Paris-based body — an intergovernmental organization responsible for improving animal health worldwide — has been at the forefront of global efforts to monitor and fight H5N1, which scientists have tracked because they fear it may mutate into a human flu virus that starts a pandemic. But "the risk was overestimated," said Bernard Vallat, director general of the animal health organization, also known as the OIE. Vallat said the H5N1 virus has proved extremely stable, despite concerns that it could mutate into a form that could spread easily among humans. "We have never seen such a stable strain," Vallat said. He said concerns a few years ago that a flu pandemic from H5N1 might be imminent lacked scientific proof. "It was just nonscientific supposition," he told reporters. At the same time, the United Nations influenza coordinator said that governments around the world need to do more to prepare for the dramatic economic impact of the next flu pandemic.

Fenty, Homeland Security, Unveil Preparedness Campaign (States News, 1/7)

Mayor Adrian M. Fenty and Darrell Darnell, Director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) today unveiled a new emergency preparedness campaign to help residents better anticipate their needs in the event of an emergency. A new website, 72hours.dc.gov, allows District residents to create a customized plan to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters of all types. Several types of new emergency preparedness guides have also been published, including ward-specific evacuation guides and guides for families and children. 72hours.dc.gov is the new home of the Emergency Information Center (EIC) website. The site has been redesigned with new interactive features to make it easier for users to access information about preparedness, protective actions and local police, fire and health care facilities. The site helps citizens answer the question, What would you do if a major disaster hit the District? and advises them to take four simple steps to prepare for an emergency:

1. Get informed
2. Make a Plan
3. Make an emergency kit
4. Be aware

72hours.dc.gov allows all residents to create an evacuation and safety plan that addresses the needs of their family, said Fenty. The Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency has done a great job creating ward-specific evacuation guides that give citizens the tools they need to plan for all types of emergencies.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

FEMA relaxes rule on aid for rebuilding (The Advocate, 1/17)

Louisiana residents who started rebuilding their properties without government approval

might be eligible for federal grant money. Typically, projects started or completed prior to FEMA approval are not eligible for funding under the agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. With the new exemption, structures damaged by the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita may be eligible for retroactive funding. The exemption applies to property owners who have completed or started mitigation work on their property by March 16, 2008. The property must also have been identified as eligible for elevation through the state's Road Home program, or included in a parish's grant application to the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. The Road Home program provides buyout or repair grants to homeowners with severe damage from the hurricanes. LRA Communication Director Melissa Landry said parishes were allocated \$250 million of the \$1.4 billion in grant money made available to the state through FEMA. The remaining money went to the Road Home program, through which individual homeowners are eligible to receive up to \$30,000 specifically for hazard mitigation, such as, elevating the structure, she said. Work not started or completed by March 16, might still be eligible for grant funding. Property owners will have to wait for FEMA review and approval prior to starting work. GOHSEP State Hazard Mitigation Officer Casey Levy said four parishes already have submitted grant applications for prior work done on 14 properties. The state Office of Community Development, which was involved in the Road Home program, and GOHSEP are expected to contact homeowners and parishes that applied for funding. Franki Coons, FEMA's deputy section chief for mitigation programs, said that to be funded, the projects have to meet all of the grant program's initial requirements as well as those set by GOHSEP.

[N.O. PD hopes move to new HQ will help city's recovery from Katrina](#) (AP, 1/17)

After a trying year of more than 200 murders and a rise in crime, at least police once again have a permanent place to call home. The New Orleans Police Department, which has operated out of trailers in the 2 1/2 years since Hurricane Katrina, dedicated a renovated headquarters Thursday that brings its major components back under one roof. Crime has become a leading concern for local government and business leaders trying to attract investment, boost tourism and reassure residents that the city is on the mend. The move to a permanent headquarters coincides with what Mayor Ray Nagin believes is a crucial time in the city's recovery. It "sends the signal that the criminal justice system is back," he said. Nagin said he thinks having key departments such as investigations and the superintendent's office housed in the same building will help morale and stanch the flow of officers from the force's depleted ranks. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Superintendent Warren Riley spoke of how difficult it has been rebuilding police ranks without a permanent headquarters. "It was an awful situation that we were in," he told the crowd that included law enforcement and city officials. "It was 19th-century conditions, and this was not easy."

[National Council on Disability to Discuss Emergency Preparedness for People With Disabilities in New Orleans](#) (PR Newswire, 1/15)

The National Council on Disability (NCD) will hear presentations on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities at the New Orleans Marriott Convention Center, 859 Convention Center Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 29, 2008, at 1:15 p.m. These presentations are open to the public and the media. The primary focus of these

presentations will be to gather information and listen to presentations from stakeholders and professionals as well as to receive public comment on emergency preparedness, homeland security, and other issues of importance to people with disabilities. Under the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill (H.R. 5441) signed by President Bush on October 4, 2006, NCD was assigned key responsibilities for disability-related issues in homeland security. Speakers include:

- Charles Tubre, Systems Advocacy Specialist, Advocacy Center, New Orleans
- Sandra Bookman, Executive Director, Houston Center for Independent Living
- Christy Dunaway, Executive Director, Living Independence For Everyone (LIFE) of Mississippi, Jackson, MS
- Kay Wilkins, CEO, Southeast Louisiana Chapter, ARC, Metairie, LA
- Michael Hawley, Major and Area Commander, The Salvation Army, New Orleans, LA
- Rebecca Floyd, Executive Director, Mississippi Protection and Advocacy System, Inc., Jackson, MS

The discussion will be followed by a question and answer session. In 2003, NCD committed itself to evaluating the Federal Government's role in the areas of homeland security, emergency preparedness and disaster relief, as they relate to people with disabilities. NCD's first evaluation findings were issued in April 2005 in the report, *Saving Lives: Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Planning*. (http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2005/saving_lives.htm). The emergency preparedness presentations will be part of NCD's quarterly board meeting, which will begin January 28 at 11:00 a.m. and ends January 30 at 4:45 p.m. at the New Orleans Marriott Convention Center. For more information, please contact NCD's director of external affairs Mark S. Quigley at mquigley@ncd.gov or by telephone at 202-272-2004.

N.O. Colleges Slog Toward Katrina Recovery (Chronicle Of Higher Education, 1/11) Twenty-eight months after Hurricane Katrina forced the closures of more than a half-dozen New Orleans colleges and universities, many of them are still struggling to regain their enrollments and restore buildings damaged by floodwater and mold. Over all, college enrollment in New Orleans increased slightly in the fall of 2007, reaching 74 percent of pre-Katrina levels, compared with 72 percent in the fall of 2006, says a report released in November by the Brookings Institution and the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. The biggest increases were at two of the hardest-hit institutions: Southern University at New Orleans and Delgado Community College. Because of demographic shifts after the storm -- the city's black population dropped from 68 percent of all residents to below 58 percent between 2004 and 2007, according to various estimates -- historically black colleges have had to reach beyond their traditional recruiting pools. For Southern University, where enrollment rose 21 percent in the fall of 2007, that meant expanding online courses. Other colleges are struggling to attract enough students to replace the relatively large classes that entered before Katrina and are now graduating. Even if those colleges attract more freshmen, they still have a "bubble" of smaller, post-Katrina classes that will reduce enrollment, and tuition dollars, for the next few years. New Orleans's higher-education growth is slightly better than the city's population rebound, which has inched back to 63 to 70 percent of its pre-Katrina level, city officials estimate.

N.O. hires project manager to guide building work (N.O. Times Picayune, 1/10)

The city has hired a project manager that officials say will speed the rebuilding of infrastructure damaged during Hurricane Katrina. Colorado-based MWH was awarded a contract the city expects to be worth about \$6 million. The total amount it gets will depend, though, on the level of work it does, according to the city. Ed Blakely, New Orleans' recovery director, on Thursday said the contract should make the rebuilding process more efficient and that the bundling of similar projects should drive down costs. This is the approach the private sector would take, he added. MWH's role will include monitoring the work; ensuring uniformity in documentation provided to FEMA for reimbursement; and making the process more transparent, company chief executive Bob Uhler said. Projects will be prioritized by a city team, and bundled, meaning fire houses will be done with fire houses, police stations with police stations, and so forth. Blakely said the firm is being brought on now, nearly 2 1/2 years after Katrina, because it took time for the city to figure out what needed to be rebuilt, where, and on what timetable. He said the city also was limited in the number of architects it had available, and that having MWH on board should alleviate that. Mayor Ray Nagin estimated the city would have more than \$1 billion in projects over the next few years. The city expects project information to be posted online by next month. A Web site for another city, demonstrated at a Thursday news conference, allows people to search for projects and to get details on those in their neighborhoods. It wasn't clear whether that same sort of site would be set up for New Orleans.

Court sides with FEMA in dispute over rental aid for Katrina victims (AP, 1/8)

FEMA can end housing subsidies for many victims of Hurricane Katrina, an appeals court ruled. Many storm victims now receive help through a different federal agency, and it wasn't clear how many people would be affected by the ruling. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decided Friday that storm victims who apply for rental assistance aren't legally entitled to a "continuing stream of payments." "There is simply no indication that the regulations constrain FEMA's discretion to the point that it is bound to provide assistance to all eligible individuals," Judge Carolyn King wrote on behalf of a three-judge panel of the 5th Circuit. The ruling overturns a June decision that said FEMA should continue rental assistance payments to storm victims while they appeal the agency's decisions. U.S. District Judge Helen Berrigan had issued a preliminary injunction that required FEMA to continue the payments during appeals. It was unclear whether any storm victims still needed the FEMA aid. About 29,000 residents who had been getting rental assistance from FEMA have been shifted into a program run by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said Adam Strochak, a lawyer for the plaintiffs. "A large portion of our class is getting the assistance they need and deserve," he said. The plaintiffs are weighing their legal options following Friday's ruling, Strochak said. No Gulf Coast families have been receiving rental assistance from FEMA since the transition to HUD's program took effect Dec. 1, said FEMA spokeswoman Alexandra Kirin, adding that she couldn't comment further on the ruling because it involves pending litigation. The 5th Circuit blocked the preliminary injunction in July, then vacated the court order Friday. The appeals court also sent the case back to Berrigan last week for further proceedings.

