

Disaster News Update – March 24 to 30, 2008

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Building Collapse:** Maryland
- **Drought:** Oregon, California, Nevada, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee
- **Explosion / Structure Fire:** Arkansas (Meat Plant Fire), Ohio (House Explosion)
- **Fire:** Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina
- **Flood/Flash Flood:** Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Louisiana
- **HAZMAT:** Florida (Fertilizer Plant Fire), Massachusetts (Tanker Accident)
- **Heavy Rain:** Texas, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Iowa
- **Strong Wind:** Texas, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Louisiana
- **Tornado:** Louisiana, Texas

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Arkansas](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (03/26)
- [Georgia](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (3/20)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (3/19)
- [Wisconsin](#): Snow (3/19 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Texas](#): Wildfires (3/14 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Illinois](#): Snow (3/13 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (3/12)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (3/7)
- Fire Declarations: [Texas \(3/27\)](#), [Oklahoma \(3/21\)](#), [Texas \(3/20\)](#), [Texas \(3/19\)](#), [Texas \(3/14a\)](#), [Texas \(3/14b\)](#), [Texas \(3/14c\)](#), [Texas \(3/12\)](#), [Texas \(3/4\)](#), [Texas \(2/28\)](#), [Texas \(2/25\)](#), [Oklahoma \(2/25\)](#), [Texas \(2/25b\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Presbytery offers aid to anyone in need (MS Sun Herald, 3/28)

Russell Olderman seems to be more a man of action than of words. As disaster-recovery coordinator for the Presbytery of Mississippi, he's the go-to/get-it-done guy for team after team of volunteers who have been coming into the area to help build houses from the ground up for the area's Hurricane Katrina survivors. Initially, Presbytery of Mississippi Disaster Recovery volunteers mucked out, refurbished and earned a reputation as first-class demolders, but since their affiliation with International Relief and Development, they have become house-building wizards. Olderman has trouble sitting still long enough to talk about what they're doing, preferring instead to get about the business of doing it, but one recent March afternoon he settled long enough to share a few comments, opinions and feelings about how his volunteer stints here after the hurricane affected him.

As he told a writer for the Presbyterian magazine *Voice* in February, they literally "changed my life." Since forming an alliance with IRD in the autumn of 2007, PMDR has been able to begin construction on and expects to complete by month's end 23 new homes in the area, each a modest but relatively spacious home of 1,300 square feet with three bedrooms and two baths. The money to build them comes from donations to the Presbytery but also from grants from the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and other organizations, the latter funneled through IRD. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance covers the salaries of 10 employees and all operating expenses for the relief effort, \$650,000 annually. And that funding is expected to continue for at least two more years.

Web site offers help for the helpers (MS Sun Herald, 3/28)

Jamie Aten has been beaverishly busy since we last crossed paths with him in the autumn of 2006. Aten, who is on the faculty at the University of Southern Mississippi, and he is the young psychology assistant professor whose faith-based poll of Katrina survivors led to our Letters to God project some 18 months ago; find out more about him and that earlier project today at sunherald.com. Aten's latest and most elaborate effort -- in collaboration with Sharon Topping, also a USM faculty member -- is the Church Disaster Mental Health Project, which can be accessed online. The Web site is packed with information that should help area clergy members better deal with the psychological and mental-health needs of Katrina survivors in their flocks. Indeed, the outreach project provides support for preachers in any catastrophic situation, weather-related or otherwise. Aten's and Topping's research was a direct catalyst, and the project began at the end of last summer. Needs expressed by faith communities all over the Mississippi Coast got the ball rolling, with particular emphasis on reaching leaders of black churches who, one year after Katrina, said they wanted training to help them deal with their congregations' mental-health needs. A grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts provided financial support, and the Rand Gulf States Policy Institute collaborated. What will you find at churchdisasterhelp.org? Training materials, manuals, book recommendations and a massively long list of links to mental-health agencies as well as disaster-relief centers, agencies and organizations, including those that are faith-based.

Hands on Disaster Response Assessment Team Busy in the U.S. (PR Newswire, 3/27)

Hands on Disaster Response (HODR) have been busy over the last two months with U.S. disasters. HODR completed a three-week micro deployment on March 5th in Gassville, Arkansas after the city suffered a direct hit by a tornado during the Super Tuesday Twisters. A HODR assessment team is now en route to the flooded areas in Arkansas and Missouri to evaluate the situation. Over the past week floodwaters have inundated six states in the Midwestern United States. The HODR team will visit the hardest hit of these affected areas and assess the need and potential for a volunteer project. Should HODR decide to deploy and coordinate a volunteer relief project, they will immediately begin accepting donations and volunteers.

Preparing the senior citizens (Tulsa World, 3/27)

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many older residents fell through the cracks of recovery efforts. In reaction to those problems, the American Red Cross developed a program on disaster preparedness aimed specifically at the elderly, said Nellie Kelly,

spokeswoman for the Tulsa Area Chapter of the American Red Cross. It is a modification of regular **disaster**-preparedness classes, with focus on subjects such as dealing with prescriptions and medical devices, Kelly said. "Seniors just have other issues in addition to what everyone faces in a disaster," she said. The demonstration has been presented about 40 times to nearly 1,500 people since it was created about two years ago. The program's relevance was obvious during the ice storm in December, when many homes were without power and pharmacies were closed, Kelly said. "I think seniors recognize the fact that they can be overlooked during a disaster and they have to prepare themselves," she said. Terry Brentlinger, one of the program volunteers, said feedback from those attending the classes has been positive.

Missouri Humane Society ensures pets not forgotten (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 3/27)
Call it a lesson from Hurricane Katrina: Don't forget the animals. When the Gulf Coast flooded after that 2005 storm, tens of thousands of animals were abandoned. Many died. Evacuation plans at the time made no allowances for pets. They were an afterthought. Animal rescue groups and others across the country saw it as a gaping hole in disaster planning. So when flooding absorbed parts of Missouri recently, the Humane Society of Missouri was ready with a system to move pets and animals to safety. The Humane Society has even done preemptive rescues. On Wednesday, it delivered 39 dogs and 18 cats to its shelter in St. Louis from the Bootheel town of Caruthersville - two days before flooding was expected there. "We want to make sure what happened in Katrina never happens here," said Tim Rickey, the group's director of rescues and investigations. Shortly after Katrina, Rickey and Humane Society staff met with state emergency management officials to sketch out an animal disaster plan. The Humane Society, a not-for-profit organization, took the lead. By May 2007, the first real test of the plan occurred in Chillicothe, Mo., about 250 miles west of St. Louis. Flooding along the Missouri River required the rescue of dozens of animals. Similar animal-rescue deals have been struck in several states. In 2006, a federal law was passed requiring FEMA to ensure local officials plan for the needs of pets during disasters. This month, the Humane Society has been busy rescuing animals in Piedmont, Mo., and Allenville, Mo. Recent efforts have focused on Caruthersville, a town of 6,400 along the Mississippi River. The river is expected to crest 8 feet above flood stage on Friday. Animals have poured into the Caruthersville Humane Society - more than 115 in five days - at a facility that houses only about 50.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

County Disaster Council is reborn (Modesto Bee, 3/25)

In a disaster such as a flood or earthquake, most people instinctively turn to government to handle the situation. But the government isn't the only resource that rushes in to help: church groups, nongovernment agencies such as the Red Cross and food banks, community groups, local industries and spontaneous volunteers pitch in as well. Stanislaus County is resurrecting and restructuring its Disaster Council to make sure all those efforts are coordinated and used efficiently. The Disaster Council dates back to 1946, and has served various purposes, including civil defense efforts during the Cold War. At today's Board of Supervisor's meeting, the council is expected to be revamped

and combined with an Operational Area Council to bring the community together in planning for disasters. "A lot of folks have a role in emergency management," said Gary Hinshaw, the county's assistant director of emergency services. The new Disaster Council structure will make sure they all are following state and federal protocols for handling emergencies and have coordinated plans, so the response is rapid and smoothly integrated. An example, Hinshaw said, is a disruption of gasoline and diesel fuel supplies. The county knows how many gallons of fuel it uses, but in an emergency, how does the county set priorities for schools, utilities, hospitals, ambulances, fire stations and law enforcement? The Disaster Council, with county and city representatives, will create a planning framework for the different groups and agencies to use, and will approve the plans developed by the local groups. The Operational Area Council will include participants from all the groups involved in emergency response, from utilities to radio stations, environmental groups to schools. They will formulate plans for their own group to be submitted to the Disaster Council.

Disaster council helps eastern New Mexico recover from tornado (AP, 3/24)

A year has gone by since a devastating tornado struck eastern New Mexico, and the chairman of the Eastern New Mexico Disaster Recovery Council says it's only fitting for those helping survivors rebuild their lives that the anniversary fell on Easter. The Rev. Lance Clemmons, the council's chairman and the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, said the first anniversary being the same day as Easter is a wonderful thing. When the tornado hit Clovis last spring, thousands of people suddenly had unexpected needs. In the aftermath, thousands more wanted to help in any way they could. Clemmons said that led to the formation of the disaster council, which is made up of dozens of faith-based and community-based organizations. Initially, the teams helping tornado survivors and those whose homes were damaged or destroyed came from the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross and those practiced in emergency response. Capt. Tammy Ray, Salvation Army Corps Officer in Clovis, said about 20 Salvation Army personnel and nearly 3,000 volunteers helped serve more than 12,000 meals and more than 33,000 snacks and bottles of water; distribute 118 gift cards for immediate needs and arrange motel rooms and other shelter for those displaced by the tornado. Meanwhile, more than 100 American Red Cross workers assessed 742 dwellings in the area. They drove to neighborhoods hit by the tornado to hand out tools, work gloves and garbage bags. They also distributed vouchers for clothing, food and repair materials, Snyder said.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Non-stop flooding in Arkansas entering 3rd week (Associated Press, 3/29)

Arkansas was spared widespread storms Saturday but remained waterlogged from non-stop flooding that began nearly two weeks ago. Storms hit isolated areas and residents along the White River in east Arkansas and the Black River in the northeast contended for another day with rising water and muck. The National Weather Service issued a 24-hour flood watch Saturday morning for Lawrence and Randolph counties, while predicting more rain through at least Monday. The Monroe County community of Maddox Bay along the White River, where at least one resident was sandbagging his

home a few days ago, was under water and only a flock of birds seemed to be watching over the small community on the White River. The March flooding was the most severe in Arkansas since 1982, and places along the White, Spring, Eleven Point and Black rivers reached 100-year flood stages. President Bush declared nearly half of Arkansas 35 counties in north-central and eastern Arkansas federal disaster areas for immediate emergency assistance. Friday, he designated 19 of those counties eligible for disaster relief for either individual residents or for community public assistance. FEMA Director R. David Paulison and state emergency officials plan to survey the flood damage by air Monday and possibly stop for a ground tour in Pocahontas, said Grant Tennille, a spokesman for Gov. Mike Beebe. As the floodwaters slowly recede, the teams survey properties atop the soaked ground. "We're working feverishly," said Dan Martinez, a spokesman for FEMA, which already had a temporary office set up in Little Rock after Feb. 5 tornadoes. "We'll continue for as long as the weather allows."

Response Set as Floods Continue (Disaster News Network, 3/28)

With water rushing down the White River at higher levels than they have been in a quarter century, volunteers are standing by to help with recovery as soon as the rising river and others in Arkansas and the Midwest crest. Friday is probably the earliest time the rivers will start to reach their highest point, but with rain expected that day through much of the state, conditions could get worse before they get better. According to the Renee Fair, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Little Rock, the rain expected this weekend should not be anything like the amounts that were seen last week, when five to 10 inches fell over a two and a half day period. The chance of rain continues through Wednesday. Rain or not, the threat of flooding continues. Excessive runoff from last week's rain will still push river levels higher, mostly in the eastern part of the state, near the border with Missouri. The greatest threat remains for the lower White River, the Black River and the Cache River, which is beginning to rise as the Black and White rivers reach beyond their limits.

Rivers' floods to unite, back up into county (Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 3/28)

The rising White River will have nowhere to go when it meets the already swollen Mississippi River in the next few days, causing high water to spread out and back up, a weather service official said Wednesday. Steve Bays, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in North Little Rock, said Wednesday that high water from the two rivers will collide at their confluence in Desha County, causing flooding there that could linger for weeks. Not only will the White River be unable to drain into the Mississippi River, Bays said, but its current may flow back upriver and spill into the Arkansas River to the south. The resulting backup could keep high water on the ground along the White River as far north as St. Charles in Arkansas County until mid-April. "It's just going to hang around for a while," said Shanda Harwell, Arkansas County's emergency management coordinator. "That's going to be the problem here." Gov. Mike Beebe declared four more counties state disaster areas on Wednesday, as flooding along the lower White River worsened. FEMA teams continued to assess damage in north Arkansas in advance of the agency's top official arriving Monday. Weakened levees also continued to leak in Randolph and Prairie counties, and animals in the White River National Wildlife Refuge headed to higher ground. In Monroe County, the National

Weather Service reported Wednesday that the White River at Clarendon was at 32.39 feet - 6.39 feet above flood stage - and is expected to crest at 33.5 feet by Saturday afternoon.

President Declares Major Disaster for Arkansas (FEMA, 3/26)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Arkansas to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on March 18, 2008, and continuing. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for the state by President Bush. The President's action makes federal funding available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures, limited to direct federal assistance, in Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Clay, Conway, Craighead, Crawford, Faulkner, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hot Spring, Howard, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Johnson, Lawrence, Logan, Madison, Marion, Nevada, Newton, Pope, Randolph, Scott, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, Washington, White, Woodruff, and Yell counties. Paulison named Kenneth M. Riley as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Riley said that damage surveys have been scheduled and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are completed.

Some face painful wait for aid (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 3/26)

Tom Grimm has lived in his three-bedroom house at the end of First Street all his life. His newlywed parents moved into the home with knotty pine walls in 1952. This most recent flood, however, might bring on the bulldozer. Grimm's insurance adjuster assessed the damage Tuesday morning to the still-soggy house, the adjuster's first stop out of 40 on his list. Because of new federal regulations, Grimm was told, insurance will not cover repairs if the damage is more than 50 percent of the home's value. Several homeowners are in a waiting game in Pacific, one of the areas hardest hit by Meramec River flooding last week. Many are wondering if their insurance or FEMA is going to cover the cost of repairs. Grimm said he will know more about his situation when FEMA sends its assessment teams into the area, possibly on Thursday. If the damage to his home is too much, Grimm said, he will probably receive some sort of moving assistance instead of rebuilding. Eight FEMA teams will be calculating damage in 41 counties this week to help government agencies decide whether federal assistance is justified. State governors will submit the information to Washington, where the decisions are made on the all-important disaster declarations. If the area is declared eligible, low-interest, long-term loans would be available to eligible homeowners, renters and business owners. Those loans are intended to help only with losses not covered by insurance.

State begins assessing flood damage in 19 counties (Associated Press, 3/26)

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency is assessing flood damage in 19 southern Illinois counties to see if the area could be eligible for federal disaster help. The agency wants to gauge the extent of damage to homes, businesses and public property in areas affected by last week's widespread flooding caused by heavy rains. Some parts of southern Illinois got as much as a foot of rain. Governor Rod Blagojevich has declared 19 of the counties state disaster areas. To get federal aid, the state must prove that recovery is beyond the capability of local and state governments.

Volunteers Hold Back Arkansas Flood (CNN, 3/25)

Volunteers armed with sandbags held back water springing up from under a rural levee Tuesday as the White River continued its highest surge in a quarter-century through eastern Arkansas. The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning during the morning for rural Prairie County north of Interstate 40 after spotters noticed the levee had "sand boils" -- water passing under the earthen barrier and appearing on the side like a muddy spring. By the afternoon, 100 volunteers held back the flow by building sandbag barriers for the water to be held in, creating pressure to stem the tide. Thomas "Babe" Vincent, a levee district board member, praised the spirit of the volunteers. "We've had people here today from the other side of the river who aren't in danger," Vincent said. After heavy rains last week, major rivers overflowed, inundating north and central Arkansas and driving people from their homes and businesses. Almost half the state -- 35 counties -- was declared a disaster area. The waters continued to rise Tuesday even as the sun was shining. The Army Corps of Engineers did not expect the White River to crest downriver at Clarendon until Friday at 33.5 feet.

Insurers Say Losses From Ga. Tornadoes May Reach \$300 Million (Bestwire, 3/24)

With seven Georgia counties declared federal disaster areas, insurers and state regulators continue to add up the costs of tornadoes and severe thunderstorms that struck downtown Atlanta and other parts of the state March 14-15. The estimated amount of insured losses remains at \$250 million, but is still being evaluated, said Wayne Whitaker, a spokesman for the state Department of Insurance. Georgia insurers said the figure could go higher than \$300 million. State Farm has received more than 10,000 homeowners, commercial and automobile insurance claims to date and expect the number to continue to increase, spokesman Rob Lowenthal said. The insurer has five remote teams assisting with claims in the affected counties, he said. The bulk of the reported damage is from commercial property in Atlanta, state officials said. President George W. Bush approved the declaration for Bartow, Burke, DeKalb, Floyd, Fulton, Jefferson, and Polk counties. The declared counties are eligible for aid including grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other 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, according to a statement from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

Long-Term Recovery Efforts Underway In Muhlenberg County (FEMA, 3/24)

People in Kentucky who suffered losses as a result of the storms and tornadoes that struck last month, but who still have serious unmet needs, may find help through numerous volunteer groups who will be in the state long after the main disaster response has ended. Even in the face of devastating damage and loss of life, the citizens of Muhlenberg County Kentucky rallied around to help their neighbors affected by the storms. The towns of Central City and Powderly were hit hardest, and community leaders knew that recovering from the storms was going to be a long-term process. A group of concerned citizens in Muhlenberg County came together quickly. Led by a the local ministerial alliance, the group wanted to do whatever it could to aid and comfort the people who had lost so much due to the severe storms. Not sure what to do first, they

looked to their neighbors in Hopkins County for guidance. Just two years before, Hopkins County had been struck by tornadoes and severe storms and needed to put their community back together too. The people in Hopkins County had formed a long term recovery committee with the assistance of FEMA. To help find ways to meet the long-term needs of those affected by this disaster FEMA assigned a liaison to work with local, state and national voluntary organizations that serviced Hopkins County. Their neighbors in Muhlenberg County are now doing the same thing.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Winter's worst is yet to come if snow melts quickly in ME (Bangor Daily News, 3/26)
State officials plan to seek a federal emergency declaration for northern Maine as communities struggle to cope with a record-setting winter that shows few signs of letting up. Vernon Ouellette, director of the Aroostook County Emergency Management Agency, said Tuesday that communities are in severe financial straits due to the seemingly nonstop storms that have dumped more than 15 feet of snow on parts of northern Maine. Even though wintry weather is far from over in The County, the bigger threat would come if the enormous snow pack blanketing northern Maine were to quickly begin melting, he said. Dan Cashman, spokesman for Baldacci, said the state may send a formal emergency declaration request to FEMA as early as Friday or the beginning of next week. The declaration, which would be for the entire winter rather than a specific storm, would funnel additional federal emergency funds into Maine to help the state, county and localities cover costs. Towns have blown through their snow removal budgets with several weeks left in the snow season. The Maine Department of Transportation reports that 40 roads are so clogged with snow banks that they are down to a single lane. Buildings have collapsed in Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Garfield and other communities. And last weekend's storm, which dumped 10 to 18 inches on parts of The County, took a huge bite out of local businesses on one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year.

Hurricane forecasters' network going public (South FL Sun Sentinel, 3/26)
Two veteran South Florida weather forecasters are selling their upstart emergency communications company to an investment firm, a move to boost the probability they can improve instant communications during natural disasters. Meteorologist Bryan Norcross of WFOR-Ch. 4 and Max Mayfield, the former director of the National Hurricane Center, on Tuesday agreed to sell America's Emergency Network LLC to Brampton Crest International Inc. of Miami Beach. Norcross, WFOR's hurricane specialist, will be company president and chief executive officer. With almost 40 years in broadcasting, he's experienced some of the frustrations caused by a communications disconnect among the media, government and the community during a disaster. He became known in South Florida after delivering around-the-clock coverage when Hurricane Andrew hit sections of Miami-Dade County in August 1992. Mayfield, who retired last year from the hurricane center, spent 34 years with the National Weather Service and is the hurricane specialist for WPLG-Ch. 10. He'll be senior vice president of government relations, working with emergency management agencies.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

The politics of Katrina recovery (The Advocate, 3/30)

With the departure of former U.S. Sen. John Edwards from the presidential race, a vacuum exists over who will be the Katrina candidate. Both U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and U.S. Sen. Barrack Obama, D-Ill., have issued detailed plans on how they would help southern Louisiana get back on its feet. The former first lady's Katrina plan calls for the creation of the Gulf Coast Corps, governed by a federal-state-local board. Much like President Franklin Roosevelt's public works job corps during the Great Depression, the Clinton plan would enlist workers to confront infrastructure needs in the ravaged regions. The corps would provide financial incentives to professionals, such as teachers, doctors and nurses, as well as hiring workers for public works such as rebuilding fire stations, hospitals, schools, roads, sewer and water systems. Clinton would also take the federal rebuilding coordinator out of the Department of Homeland Security and put that office in the West Wing of the White House, reporting directly to the president. Clinton's plan would call for a Katrina-Rita census that would canvass all federal assistance needs of Gulf Coast communities, and a "stern-to-stern" review of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans and progress. Clinton also wants to investigate how insurance is administered, including a look at the National Flood Insurance Program. She calls for more public housing development and providing financial incentives to builders and developers of the region's housing stock. Noting that New Orleans crime has spiked since the hurricane, Clinton has pledged to use federal dollars to add 200 new police officers to city beats. As her husband did, Clinton would also elevate FEMA director to Cabinet-level status. Obama has issued an extensive five-page plan to aid the region. He promises to bring the city levees up to Category 5 storm strength by 2011. Like Clinton, he pledges to support the restoration of Louisiana's wetlands, noting that every four miles of wetlands can absorb about a foot of a hurricane's storm surge.

Katrina Victims May Have to Repay Money (Associated Press, 3/29)

Imagine that your home was reduced to mold and wood framing by Hurricane Katrina. Desperate for money to rebuild, you engage in a frustrating bureaucratic process, and after months of living in a government-provided trailer tainted with formaldehyde you finally win a federal grant. Then a collector calls with the staggering news that you have to pay back thousands of dollars. Thousands of Katrina victims may be in that situation. A private contractor under investigation for the compensation it received to run the Road Home grant program for Katrina victims says that in the rush to deliver aid to homeowners in need some people got too much. Now it wants to hire a separate company to collect millions in grant overpayments. The contractor, ICF International of Fairfax, Va., revealed the extent of the overpayments when it issued a March 11 request for bids from companies willing to handle "approximately 1,000 to 5,000 cases that will necessitate collection effort." The bid invitation said: "The average amount to be collected is estimated to be approximately \$35,000, but in some cases may be as high as \$100,000 to \$150,000." The biggest grant amount allowed by the Road Home program is \$150,000, so ICF believes it paid some recipients the maximum when they should not have received a penny. If ICF's highest estimate of 5,000 collection cases — overpaid by an average of \$35,000 — proves to be true, that means applicants will have to pay back a

total of \$175 million. One-third of qualified applicants for Road Home help had yet to receive any rebuilding check as of this past week. The program, which has come to symbolize the lurching Katrina recovery effort, is financed by \$11 billion in federal funds.

Katrina/Rita Case Management To Continue Until March 2009 (DHS, 3/28)

A new program will replace FEMA's current grant agreement with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which ends March 31, 2008. UMCOR has served as the lead organization for a national consortium, Katrina AidToday (KAT), which consisted of nine primary organizations that have provided case management services for tens of thousands of individuals affected by the 2005 catastrophic hurricanes. The first phase of the case management program involves providing Cora Brown funds directly to Louisiana and Mississippi so that they may continue providing case management services to individuals and families affected by the 2005 hurricanes. This period of assistance is from April 1 through May 31, 2008. The second phase of the program will focus on providing case management services through a state-managed Disaster Case Management Pilot program in Louisiana and Mississippi. Through this pilot, case management services will be provided to households affected by Katrina and Rita to help them achieve sustainable permanent housing solutions. The period of assistance will be from June 1, 2008, to March 1, 2009.