

## **Disaster News Update –November 5 to 11, 2007**

### **RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)**

- **Drought:** Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama
- **Fire:** California, Arizona, Texas, Kentucky
- **HazMat:** New York, (Sewage Release), Maryland (Explosion), West Virginia (Chemical Truck Accident), California (Maritime Accident/Oil Spill), New Mexico (Chemical Truck Accident), Missouri (Chemical Plant Release)
- **Heavy rain / Flooding:** Tennessee
- **Strong winds:** Tennessee, Oregon, Washington

### **CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)**

- [California:](#) Wildfires (10/24)
- [California:](#) Wildfires (10/23 – Emergency Declaration)
- Fire Declarations: [Hawaii \(10/28\)](#), [California 1 \(10/22\)](#), [California 2 \(10/22\)](#), [California 3 \(10/22\)](#), [California 4 \(10/22\)](#), [California 5 \(10/21\)](#), [California 6 \(10/21\)](#), [California 7 \(10/21\)](#), [California 8 \(10/21\)](#)

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Group staying true to Katrina mission** (Boston Globe, 11/8)

A crew of construction workers from Massachusetts arrived in Waveland, Miss., on a warm Tuesday last month, and by the time the workers left a week later, they had built the frames for four homes for Hurricane Katrina survivors. The next week, another set of workers framed four more houses, and the following week all eight homes had roofs and four had siding. The siding is slated to be finished this week. The workers are part of a massive effort organized by Wayland to Waveland, or W2W, a group based in Wayland that latched onto the devastated Gulf Coast community soon after Katrina hit in August 2005. This latest 16-week project, which the group is calling Mission to Mississippi, is the largest W2W endeavor so far, involving more than 400 skilled workers and at least 175 volunteers from throughout Eastern and Central Massachusetts. "The first week, 37 guys got off the plane," said Cindy Lombardo, a Wayland resident who coordinated logistics for the first two weeks. "I didn't know what to expect. They didn't wait for lunch to be served before they had their work boots on. By 4 o'clock that first afternoon, all four houses had the walls up." Lombardo was speaking on her cellphone while she awaited the third week's crew at the airport. The hurricane had destroyed 95 percent of the homes in Waveland, and only 60 percent of its 10,000 pre-Katrina residents have returned. There are 600 families still living in trailers provided by FEMA.

#### **Church hosts oasis of hope for fire victims** (San Diego Union Tribune, 11/7)

During the first days of the Witch Creek fire, thousands of meals were served to dog-tired firefighters, police officers and others on the steps of Mountain View Church in Ramona. "For six or seven days it was where they ate," said Ramona sheriff's Sgt. Dave Brown.

"After 20 hours of work it was where they could stop for a cup of coffee and the nicest people you could ever meet were there to talk to. "It fed their stomachs and their souls, because they had seen some bad stuff during those days. It wasn't a scenic adventure." Those meals were provided by local **volunteers** from Mountain View and other churches. Now the grounds of the church, off state Route 78 near Ash Street, have become an oasis for fire victims -- not just those who lost their homes but also for those living paycheck to paycheck who are hurting because of lost income the past few weeks. Everything is free, no questions asked. "We're willing to help anyone," Denny Nissley said. The faith-based nondenominational group Christ in Action, which Nissley founded and oversees as executive director, came to Ramona on Oct. 28 and plans to stay as long as there is a need.

#### **Disaster Relief Goes Beyond Federal/State Assistance** (FEMA, 11/7)

The road to recovery can have its bumps and potholes-ask anyone trying to come back from the October firestorm. Because government assistance can only go so far, a network of nonprofit, voluntary and faith-based agencies steps in to help. Working quietly in the background of the California wildfire disaster, these volunteers-coordinated by FEMA, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and California Volunteers-take on and resolve some of the thorniest problems for people impacted by the disaster. Disaster recovery for every family moves in stages from emergency relief, to short-term recovery (about the first six months), and eventually to long-term recovery, which may take years. The help that voluntary agencies and generous donors provide is essential for filling in the gaps between needs and government aid. FEMA funds may help with temporary housing, repair or replacement of damaged homes, and other lost property, but the rules of federal assistance sometimes cannot address a particular problem. In California, a web-based donations management system is being used to receive and categorize disaster relief contributions and serve as an informational resource for volunteer agencies. To provide either financial or in-kind donations to help the victims of the Southern California wildfires, call 1-800-750-2858 or visit the OES Web site at [www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov). FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

#### **Volunteers Work to Help Nappanee** (Disaster News Network, 11/7)

If there's such a thing as a model disaster, the Nappanee tornado may be it. The northern Indiana community of 6,700 suffered no deaths and only five minor injuries in the twister that roared through town about 10:35 p.m. Oct. 18. Nevertheless, the devastation from the storm's 165 mph winds was overwhelming - but so was the response of volunteers who helped get the town back on its feet in days. Just three days after the twister hit, volunteers four and five abreast lined up for 300 yards, boarding school buses at a local high school to go and help with cleanup. What Nappanee Mayor Larry Thompson said he will always remember is those 3,000 early volunteers deploying to the damaged area in a convoy of school buses behind emergency vehicles with flashing lights.

#### **Mock terror attack needs volunteers** (San Jose Mercury News, 11/5)

How would you like to spend the day inside a crowded stadium, pretending to vomit and being drenched in fake chemical gas? Sound like fun? Wait, there's more. You won't get paid. But you will be helping local firefighters, police officers and paramedics practice for the biggest and most unusual emergency drill in California -- a mock bio-terrorist attack Nov. 14 in Silicon Valley where 500 guests are attending an all-night rock concert at Municipal Stadium in San Jose. Organizers say it's the first time in Santa Clara County that regular citizens en masse are being asked to participate in this type of drill, which California's 58 counties first began practicing in 2004, as fallout from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The program, dubbed "Golden Guardian," is funded by DHS and managed by the state Office of Homeland Security. A 2005 drill in Oakland featured a mock attack on a "concert" at McAfee Coliseum. "We've always had victims, but they've been off-duty professionals," said Tim Quigley, executive director of the Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley, a key partner of the operation. "This is the first time we're testing the real population. It's one thing to be academic, but we wanted to test the strength of the system." So Quigley is putting out a call to find 500 volunteers who will spend seven hours Nov. 14 to role-play characters at a mock rock concert. (In reality, organizers will feature movies and live bands throughout the day, plus free breakfast and lunch.)

**Need for volunteers rises as fires wane** (San Diego Union Tribune, 11/5)

As the flames wane, so does the public attention. But the firestorm recovery is only beginning. And for anyone willing to help, there are many needs volunteers can fill in the coming days, weeks and months. "This is really where most of the opportunity starts to emerge," said Sue Carter, executive director of Volunteer San Diego. The agency is coordinating volunteer relief efforts with city and county officials and community groups. Volunteers can answer phones for a 24-hour hotline for fire victims or care for children at assistance centers. They can sign up to fill sandbags and clear debris. Children can pitch in, too -- comforting animals at a Rancho Santa Fe shelter or growing seedlings to replant in burn zones. Last week, as in the aftermath of the 2003 fires, thousands volunteered. Afterward, "most of us go back to our regular lives," Carter said. "The attention on volunteering decreases, and that's exactly when the volunteer needs start to increase." San Diego Habitat for Humanity is lining up volunteers to rebuild homes. It also needs help collaborating with nonprofit groups. "We are on the eve of beginning all these projects," said San Diego Habitat executive director Cheryl Keenan. "Come February, we'll really have a lot of hammers going." The American Red Cross of San Diego and Imperial Counties has sufficient **volunteers** to handle last week's crisis but could use more for others that don't make headlines, spokeswoman Gayle Falkenthal said.

Volunteer San Diego: (858) 636-4131, [volunteersandiego.org](http://volunteersandiego.org)

Habitat for Humanity: (619) 283-4663, [www.sdhfh.org](http://www.sdhfh.org)

American Red Cross: (858) 309-1200, [www.sdarc.org](http://www.sdarc.org)

## COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

**Bio-terrorism drill in San Jose needs volunteers for event** (SJ Mercury News, 11/9)

Volunteers concerned about community safety will have the chance to contribute to

emergency preparedness on Nov. 14. Volunteer Center Silicon Valley is seeking 500 volunteers for the Golden Guardian Bio-terrorism Emergency Preparedness Exercise taking place from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the San Jose Municipal Stadium. Volunteers, who must be 18 or older, will play the part of concert attendees while local police, fire and medical personnel will get practice in responding to an emergency. Volunteers will be trained before the exercise begins and lunch will be provided. To volunteer, visit [www.vcsv.us](http://www.vcsv.us) and click on volunteer, or call (408) 247-1126

**Quake awareness events in SC expanded** (The Post and Courier (SC), 11/8)

No major storms have hit the Lowcountry this year, and many believe that if they can just get to the end of hurricane season on Nov. 30, everything will be OK. However, don't let your guard down yet. Earthquakes, which could be catastrophic for downtown Charleston as well as the rest of the area, don't pay attention to seasons. For that reason, local and state officials are planning several activities to raise awareness. Gov. Mark Sanford has declared Nov. 4-10 as Earthquake Awareness Week in South Carolina. The College of Charleston will host events this week to educate the public about earthquake history and how to prepare for one. "Many times when we try to organize things for earthquake awareness, hurricanes tend to interrupt it," said Norman Levine, an assistant professor in the college's geology department. Even though the college has had guest speakers talk about earthquakes in the past, the geology department decided this year to expand the activities.

**City fair instructs how to be prepared** (Salt Lake Tribune, 11/8)

Preparing for an emergency can be like eating an elephant. Many people feel overwhelmed and have no idea where to start. Layton officials understand the importance of helping city residents prepare for emergencies. The city recently held a preparedness fair lined with how-to booths and instructional information in the hope that residents walked away from the fair with an understanding of the importance of being prepared. "We all know we are supposed to be ready, but to be ready we need to learn practical things we can put into place rather than just looking at this as an overwhelming task," said Jim Mason, Layton's assistant city manager, who was in charge of the event. The good news, Mason added, is that many people are inadvertently preparing themselves for emergencies by doing such everyday things as buying camping gear, having a barbecue grill and stocking up their pantries with sale items. He said consumers may not be aware that their tent can come in handy during an emergency, or that charcoal briquettes are a great resource for generating heat to stay warm. The main focus of this year's event was family emergency preparedness and safety awareness. Families at the event learned about planning a place to meet in the event of an emergency and about the firefighters, police officers and other safety personnel who would be available to help them.

**New advocate for helping disabled in disaster** (FL Times Union, 11/7)

Coordination between disability advocates and the state's emergency management agency has been a hit-and-miss affair for years, with a lack of awareness and communication hampering efforts and splintering resources. This week, that duty formally fell to Chip Wilson of Jacksonville, who was named the state's new disability coordinator for emergency services. Wilson, 57, was formerly the president of ADA Consultants of

Northeast Florida, which focuses on disability training, and also had a 23-year career with Prudential Insurance Co. as a disaster planner. State officials said they need Wilson to focus on a key gap in the state's emergency planning: ensuring that disability groups are communicating their disaster plans and resources with each other and with the state. "It's going to be a big effort to bring people together in the same ballpark, because over the years there's only been a finite amount of money available and each group is trying to get their own share," Wilson said. "But if we can get past the turf battles, we'll have half of the battle done."

## **RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

### **Hardly any fire victims sleeping at tent city** (San Diego Union Tribune, 11/10)

Hundreds of people are picking up supplies at a tent city in Barrett Junction set up for victims of the Harris fire, but only two people are sleeping there. People who've lost their homes have temporarily moved in with family and friends. Some are still using hotel vouchers from the Red Cross. Mark Cremeans, director of Churches of Christ Disaster Response Team, said more might seek shelter when their vouchers are gone, possibly this weekend. "If we don't build it, they won't come," Cremeans said yesterday. The tent city, which is run by West Melbourne, Fla.-based Churches of Christ, has been open since Monday. It offers food, water, hot meals and supplies to those displaced by the fire. Blackwater Worldwide, the controversial private security company, donated the tents, cots and trailers that house washers, dryers and showers. Those amenities have been popular, Cremeans said. But the 88 cots are mostly empty. Power has not been completely restored, so many, including tent city operators, are using generators. A spokeswoman for SDG&E said about 400 backcountry customers countywide are still without power. It should be restored by tomorrow. The Harris fire started Oct. 21. According to a county list, the blaze destroyed 283 homes and 171 outbuildings. Some say they are suspicious of Blackwater's role at the temporary shelter, set up on a half-acre lot across from the Barrett Junction Cafe. "I don't trust them," said Jim Ferguson, who lost his home at the Barrett Lake Mobile Home Park. He and his wife, Antonia, have been staying with friends in Dulzura. Even though Blackwater has no hand in the day-to-day operations at the tent city, rumors persist.

### **Indians to receive trailers from FEMA** (San Diego Herald Tribune, 11/9)

Mobile homes for Indians who were burned out during the October fires have arrived in Riverside County and are headed to North County reservations within two weeks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said yesterday. "They're fully furnished and equipped," said Mike Parker, a FEMA official who is overseeing relief efforts to fire-damaged reservations including La Jolla and Rincon, where flames consumed more than 100 homes. Parker said 14 of 110 mobile homes headed to California are now at March Air Reserve Base near Riverside, where inspectors are checking for any damage during transit and workers are getting them ready so families can move in. Meanwhile, FEMA is preparing the paperwork for people burned out of their homes, and volunteers and contractors are picking up ash and debris to make space for the mobile homes, he said. The FEMA homes are intended for people without insurance. They can live in them rent-

free until they find permanent housing. Parker said 11 families on the Rincon reservation have qualified for the three-bedroom trailers, but he doesn't know how many will qualify at the La Jolla reservation. Inspections at La Jolla were delayed because many people couldn't return until this week, said LaVonne Peck, a tribal member who is working on relief efforts. Living arrangements have made it hard to figure out what to do next. Some people rent, others own their homes on tribal land, and others live on private land within the reservation, Peck said. Many were uninsured.

**GA flood experience could help drought-ravaged areas** (Macon Telegraph, 11/9)

What do a major flood and a major drought have in common? They can leave a community scrambling for an emergency supply of safe drinking water. That's why Johnny Wingers, Bibb County's Emergency Management Agency director, is training emergency planners today on how to obtain and distribute drinking water during an emergency. His experience, gained when Macon spent about three weeks without a water treatment plant after the Great Flood of '94, will be a model for dozens of Middle Georgia counties planning how to cope with a historic drought. Middle Georgia isn't yet suffering from a collapsing water supply. Even north Georgia and the Atlanta area, the areas hardest hit by the drought, aren't yet importing tanker trucks of water. But failures of water pumps and water treatment plants have left Georgia communities having to provide drinking water outside the spigot with some frequency, said Ken Davis, spokesman for the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. Towns are encouraged to prepare for how to handle the problem, and the drought has heightened interest, he said. Tropical Storm Alberto submerged Macon's water treatment plant in 1994. Wingers coordinated the effort to get drinking water to thousands of people. But that's not all: Water also is necessary for toilets to flush. Wingers said he learned more than he ever wanted to know about providing and servicing portable toilets, too. Wingers recalls his shock at learning that the water treatment plant had stopped operating. "The first thing I did was put my head on my desk," he said. "The second thing I did was pray."

**Hundreds wait to get word on FEMA fire aid** (Associated Press, 11/8)

More than a week after the worst of California's wildfires subsided, more than 700 households are waiting to learn if they will qualify for federal aid to begin restoring their homes and lives, according to figures released Wednesday. FEMA has received 15,694 requests for emergency assistance since wildfires burned across Southern California last month, and hundreds continue to come in each day. The government will consider requests to pay for temporary housing, repairs or costs tied to replacing a home not covered by insurance. The maximum is \$28,800 for lost homes and property. About 70 percent of the claims roughly 11,000 involve households covered by insurance. They are set aside temporarily by FEMA until it's determined what losses were covered under their policies. Then, those households can seek payments for losses that weren't covered. That leaves almost 5,000 claims. So far, FEMA had paid out more than \$5 million in housing assistance to 1,300 of those households. About 2,300 claims were deemed ineligible, others were withdrawn voluntarily and 734 remain under review, FEMA spokeswoman Kelly Hudson said Wednesday. "We feel like ... we are keeping up a good pace," Hudson said. Meanwhile, the state is monitoring federal assistance.

**New England residents begin cleanup from Noel** (NBC, 11/5)

Power was being restored Monday to several thousand coastal residents from Massachusetts to Maine who lost electricity when the remnants of Hurricane Noel blew through the region over the weekend. The storm struck New England with just a glancing blow Saturday, bringing down tree limbs and knocking out power to 80,000 homes. State officials reported no serious injuries or deaths. By Monday morning, utility officials said fewer than 5,000 residents were without power in Massachusetts, and about 700 were without power in eastern Maine. Utilities were confident that most of the outages mainly on Cape Cod would be resolved by the end of the day. "Most of the work is restoring power to one or two customers at a time, which makes the process even more time consuming," said Michael Durand, a spokesman for NStar. "There is a lot work that needs to be done to get a relatively small area back to power." The storm was indirectly blamed for two house fires. No evacuations were linked to the storm in the region, said Peter Judge of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. The state's only serious flooding was on Brandt Point on Nantucket, where roads were closed for a few hours, he said.

**FEMA Aid to Californians Tops \$5.6 Million** (FEMA, 11/5)

Two weeks after wildfire tore through seven California counties, more than \$5.6 million in federal funds is in the hands of individuals and families affected by the disaster. More than 14,500 Californians have registered through FEMA for federal and state disaster assistance. As a result of President Bush's disaster declaration of October 24, at the request of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, residents and business owners of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, who were affected by the wildfires, are eligible to apply for federal and state individual assistance. The funds can be used to help: find temporary housing when homes are either destroyed or made unlivable by the fires; pay for home rebuilding or repairs; replace personal property not covered by insurance; and assist with necessary disaster-related expenses. Here are current disaster recovery efforts at a glance:

- 14,728 Californians registered for disaster.
- \$5,625,790 in grants approved for Californians that includes \$4,571,714 for housing and \$1,054,076 for other needs assistance.
- \$11,784,700 in Small Business Administration loans to individuals and businesses.
- 9 assistance centers set up as close as possible to the hardest-hit areas: Fallbrook, Rancho Bernardo, Ramona and El Cajon (San Diego County), National Orange Fairgrounds and Running Springs (San Bernardino County), Santa Clarita and Malibu (Los Angeles County), and Irvine (Orange County).
- 156 community relations specialists in the community, meeting with people affected by the disaster, local officials, community, and business and religious leaders, to answer questions, explain recovery programs and help solve problems.
- 2 multi-disciplinary assessment teams from state agencies in San Diego County to evaluate the needs of communities without electrical power and other services.
- 5,638 inspections completed of damaged or destroyed residences.

## **PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

### **Fire-scarred San Diego County braces for mudslides** (LA Times, 11/11)

With rain clouds gathering nearby, key officials in the post-fire recovery efforts for Southern California said Saturday that they're racing to take steps to prevent erosion and mudslides. The Witch, Poomacha and Rice fires that struck northern San Diego County last month scorched steep hillsides and hilltops, increasing the chances that rain will create muddy runoff that could endanger homes and clog streams and culverts, officials said. The Cedar and Paradise fires that struck the region in 2003 destroyed more homes than the recent fires did, but they didn't burn as much acreage on steep gradients, said Bill Peters, an official with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and spokesman for the Burned Area Emergency Response teams. As a result, San Diego County did not suffer the mudslides that occurred elsewhere in Southern California after the 2003 fires, including the slide that killed five people in the San Bernardino Mountains two months after the fires. This time could be different, Peters said. State and federal agencies are addressing that threat by combing the burned area, mapping a combined strategy that involves removing debris, placing barriers at key spots and then reseeded much of the scorched earth, possibly with crop duster-like aircraft.

### **Congress Passes Program for School AEDs** (States News Service, 11/9)

U.S. Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) announced that Congress approved funding for a program they set up to assist schools in purchasing and providing training on automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Feingold and Collins introduced an amendment to the Labor-Health and Human Services appropriations bill last month to fund the Automated Defibrillators in Adam's Memory (ADAM) Act. The ADAM Act, which Feingold and Collins got signed into law in 2003, was inspired by Adam Lemel, a 17-year-old high school student from Wisconsin who collapsed and died from an undiagnosed heart condition while playing in a basketball game. The ADAM Act funds a national clearinghouse to help schools set up public programs that provide access to AEDs and provides schools with technical guidance and appropriate training.

### **Firefighters warn of continued wildfire threat in California** (Insurance Journal, 11/7)

Rapid development in wildfire-prone areas and continued bone-dry weather have alarmed California firefighters, who began a sweeping assessment of fire danger Tuesday and what's needed to meet it. Catastrophic wildfires that burned across the state last month and in 2003 were of an intensity that should be witnessed rarely perhaps once a century, they say. The proximity of those fires has raised fears that furious blazes could become more frequent, threatening lives and property. "We've had our second 100-year fire in four years. So, if you are going to have a 100-year fire every four years, it seems that you need to dramatically change your definition of what the fire danger is in California," said Carroll Wills, a spokesman for the California Professional Firefighters. His remarks came as a state task force began a broad review of firefighting during last month's blazes, which left seven dead and destroyed more than 2,000 homes from Los Angeles County to the Mexican border. In a statement after its first meeting, the group said the October and 2003 fires show California "is faced with a new kind of fire threat" and urged the state to immediately find funding for 150 new fire engines and more firefighters.

## **GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

### **Road Home bailout keeps it afloat** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 11/11)

A \$3 billion congressional bailout of the Road Home program, passed with some last-minute wrangling Thursday, is likely to keep the homeowner-aid effort solvent through at least the end of April. And state leaders hold out hope that if things keep breaking their way, the \$3 billion could be enough to cover every eligible applicant, or at least all but 10,000 to 20,000 of them. About 186,000 people applied to Road Home's housing repair and buyout program, but 6,500 have already been ruled ineligible, and another 24,000 haven't showed up for initial appointments with program staff to determine their eligibility. Road Home expects to run out of money at the end of the year, when it expects to complete 90,000 grants. If the \$3 billion from Washington can cover 40,000 to 50,000 more applicants, it will be 10,000 to 20,000 homeowners short of covering all currently eligible applicants. Because of the 24,000 stragglers who haven't established their eligibility, calculations of the deficit are difficult to nail down. About a month ago, when the no-shows totaled 30,000, the state set a Dec. 1 deadline for scheduling an initial appointment and a Dec. 15 deadline to show up. But in the past month, just 6,000 of those people have come for an appointment, suggesting that many of them may never qualify. Andy Kopplin, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, said Thursday's congressional action cuts a deficit the LRA targets at \$3.3 billion down to just \$300 million. He also said the money should give state leaders and homeowners confidence that more help is on the way early next year, if it's still needed.

### **Storm-displaced families sought for housing aid** (Houston Chronicle, 11/10)

Federal officials have been unable to find about 5,000 families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita who qualify for a housing assistance program that begins Dec. 1, a top housing official said Friday. About 9,000 of the estimated 28,500 households eligible for help are in the Houston area, said Orlando Cabrera, assistant secretary for public and Indian housing in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD is preparing to assume the responsibility for evacuee housing from FEMA, whose two-year oversight of the program prompted numerous lawsuits and persistent criticism from evacuees and local governments. Displaced families who qualified for assistance from FEMA automatically qualify for the HUD program, but they must register for it. Public housing agencies administering the assistance have been seeking out evacuees at addresses supplied by HUD, but many of these have turned out to be incorrect, officials said. "We've knocked on every door. We've made every phone call. We've written every letter," Cabrera said. "Now we want them to come to us and say, 'We need help.'" HUD's program differs from FEMA's in two key respects: Families must contribute to their rent in \$50 increments starting next March, and caseworkers will be assigned to help each family achieve self-sufficiency by the time the program ends in March 2009 - more than 3 1/2 years after Katrina hit on Aug. 29, 2005.

### **FEMA expands elevation grants** (N.O. Times Picayune, 11/8)

State recovery officials are praising FEMA for adjusting its rules so that it can reimburse

residents who already have raised their hurricane-damaged homes. But the Louisiana leaders fear that FEMA's rule change may create essentially two programs -- one for those who have started work and one for those who haven't -- and will cause confusion. One option FEMA is considering is to give homeowners 60 days after the policy change takes effect to start elevations and other mitigation work. FEMA thinks that's enough time for news of the rule change to sink in and to let those on the verge of starting work qualify for retroactive elevation grants. But the state and some homeowner advocates worry that many won't be ready to start those projects before the 60-day grace period expires, and it will be difficult to keep those people from starting the work without prior FEMA approval, thus rendering them ineligible. For the past two weeks, FEMA has collected public comments on its proposal to allow homeowners and businesses rebuilding after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to receive federal money for elevations and other projects that would mitigate damage from future storms. The FEMA proposal also outlines a process to allow such grants for state and local efforts to mitigate future damage to public buildings.

**Road Home money in bill** (The Advocate, 11/7)

Congressional negotiators on Tuesday agreed to provide an additional \$3 billion for Louisiana's Road Home rebuilding program. The proposed funding, in a pending defense spending bill, was secured by U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, who sits on the Senate Appropriation Committee. The action isn't a guarantee: congressional Republicans have threatened to block the legislation because they say it fails to provide money to continue the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the Louisiana Democrat solved a key problem facing the state: finding a legislative vehicle to hitch the recovery money to, despite failed procedural objections from Republicans who complained the money has nothing to do with defense. "It's shot in the arm for our recovery and with the holidays approaching, provides much-needed peace of mind to those fearing that the Road Home would be closed to them," Landrieu said in a written statement. Louisiana recovery officials recently said that money for the Road Home program would run out at the end of December, leaving about 40,000 homeowners without the rebuilding grants, which can go up to \$150,000 per household. So far, 66,314 homeowners have received money. The grants are provided minus any insurance payments or other federal assistance. The average award has been \$67,360.

**More hazard mitigation work funded** (The Advocate, 11/6)

Terrebonne Parish is the latest southeast Louisiana parish to receive federal hazard mitigation funds from the state to acquire flood-prone homes. The Louisiana Recovery Authority, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and FEMA announced the approval of more than \$500,000 in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds to purchase four so-called severe repetitive loss properties in Terrebonne. A few weeks ago, the LRA, GOHSEP and FEMA approved nearly \$400,000 in HMGP funds to buy three homes in neighboring Lafourche Parish with a similar history of flood damage. The land in Terrebonne and Lafourche will be restricted to open space, recreation or wetlands. The parishes will be responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of the acquired properties. The properties will no longer be eligible for any future federal disaster assistance. The Terrebonne properties are located in Houma, Dulac and

Montegut. The Lafourche properties are in Thibodaux and Lockport. The property owners expressed an interest in selling their properties to the parish and signed voluntary participation forms. HMGP funds also are being used in southeast Louisiana to elevate homes that have repeatedly flooded and received multiple National Flood Insurance Program insurance claims. In September, the LRA, GOHSEP and FEMA approved nearly \$9 million to raise 76 homes in Jefferson Parish to the base flood elevation level.

**FEMA closing post-Katrina trailer parks** (UPI, 11/5)

The U.S. government is closing many of the temporary trailer parks in Orleans Parish, La., that were set up for victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Many residents of the trailer parks say they are having trouble finding replacement lodgings at reasonable prices while FEMA closes down the temporary sites, the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported Monday. A notice posted at A.L. Davis Park in Central City reads: "A.L. Davis Playground Temporary Housing Site Is Closing Nov. 18, 2007." The notice lists two apartment search Web sites to help residents find new housing, but neither of the sites are functional, the newspaper said. "It is recommended that your next move is into permanent housing since all parks will be closing," the note said. There have been no public announcements of park closings in New Orleans, but eviction notices have been quietly handed to residents at nearly half of the trailer parks. "FEMA group-site housing is a temporary solution, and its residents are aware of this and reminded of this," said FEMA spokesman Andrew Thomas, who said the housing-assistance program will continue until March 2009 but that "there is a transition now to move residents into permanent housing, to be administered by HUD after the first of the year."