

Disaster News Update – October 1 to 7, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, New York, Maryland, Delaware
- **Fire:** Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Florida
- **Landslide:** California
- **Structure Fire:** Colorado (Power Plant Fire)
- **Tornado:** Iowa

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Texas](#): Tropical Storm Erin (10/2)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/25)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/21)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/14)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornado (9/7)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (9/7)
- Fire Declarations: [Washington \(9/21\)](#), [Oregon \(9/3\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Group's survey prepares for future hurricane relief (Associated Press, 10/6)

Baldwin County workers involved in hurricane recovery will be surveyed in an effort to improve future disaster response in coastal communities. With a \$15,000 grant from United Way of Alabama, volunteers from Gulf Shores United Methodist Church plan to interview members of Baldwin social services, churches and other agencies that worked with victims of Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, said Amelia Fletcher, one of the project's organizers. "With all the information that we've learned from Ivan and Katrina, the faith-based groups, civic groups and others, education and social workers, just the entire population, have so much that could be used by others," she told the Press-Register. Besides the work with storm victims in Baldwin County, the program will also look at efforts by local agencies to assist residents in other areas, such as Mississippi and Louisiana. When the survey is complete, program workers will compile a report and PowerPoint presentation to be presented to local relief agencies and governments. Fletcher said program participants hope to interview as many as 200 Baldwin volunteers and workers involved in storm recovery programs. Fletcher said that two years after Katrina, Baldwin volunteers are still working to help Katrina victims, both those who have moved here from harder-hit areas to the east and local residents affected by the storm. She said many Katrina victims may harbor psychological problems that will plague them for years. Survey workers plan to meet with local agencies and volunteers in "coffee and conversation" discussions in Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. Other

meetings could also be held in the offices of other agencies around Baldwin, such as Catholic Social Services in Robertsdale and Ecumenical Ministries in Fairhope, she said.

Church helps Minnesota flood victims (Twincities.Com, 10/6)

Today, Woodbury Lutheran Church will "rock" Stockton. More than 80 volunteers will visit the small southeastern Minnesota city to distribute and help install about 1,500 sheets of Sheetrock for 35 families cleaning up and rebuilding. The Woodbury troop also will deliver drywall tape, screws, nails and compound - along with pork chops, doughnut holes, bananas and coffee. Smaller groups from Woodbury Lutheran have visited southeastern Minnesota about a dozen times since August's floods. "There was an overwhelming sense of loss the first time we went there," said Vicki Strong, disaster relief coordinator for Woodbury Lutheran, a 3,800-member congregation. About 40 volunteers from schools and other churches will join the Woodbury group in Stockton. Concordia Academy in Roseville sent almost 200 students to clean up debris two weeks ago. But a lot still needs to be done. "We haven't even scratched the tip of the surface," said Beth Winchester, Stockton city clerk. Woodbury Lutheran volunteers made several trips to Ocean Springs, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina, bringing supplies and labor to the city's 19,000 residents.

Groups team up to help homeowners after KS flooding (Kansas City Star, 10/2)

A week after the July flood, Evelyn Schlesener sat in a lawn chair across from her flood-ravaged home. "I was mostly stunned," she says now. "I just want back in the house." She's not there yet. Nor are those who lived in about 30 other damaged homes in Osawatomie. Three months after the waters of Pottawatomie Creek damaged 425 homes, apartments and businesses in the town of 4,600, the tears of evacuees have been replaced by the struggle to rebuild their homes and lives. Osawatomie is about 50 miles southwest of Kansas City. So far, Schlesener has received \$28,200 from FEMA and spent \$15,000 of that just preparing her home for repairs. She knows that the remaining \$13,200 won't be enough to finish the job. Her hope now lies with Tom Kinnan, the pastor of BreakPointe Community Church in Overland Park, who is leading an effort to raise \$250,000 and recruit volunteers to help Schlesener and six other homeowners near Third and Kelly streets. The neighborhood is in one of the worst-hit flood areas, said Rob Roberts, who heads the nonprofit Miami County-Osawatomie Long Term Recovery Team. Roberts said that the team comprises BreakPointe, the Salvation Army, the United Methodist Church, the the Mormon church, the Red Cross, the Osawatomie City Council, 1st Option Bank and the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The team is coordinating the recovery efforts for the entire county and has assessed the needs of each homeowner. Of the 425 damaged properties, about 100 were apartment units. Of the remaining 325 properties, 187 were occupied by the owners. Embarq Corp. employees are providing labor and some materials to help rebuild two group homes for developmentally disabled people. Susan Barrett, the director of community relations and development for Tri-Ko Inc., which owns the group homes, said the project was expected to cost more than \$300,000. The homes will house eight residents each. The free labor from Embarq will significantly reduce the cost of the project, she said.

UMCOR Station Leads Slidell Recovery (WFN, 10/2)

In an area that suffered extensive wind and water damage two years ago from Hurricane Katrina, long-term rebuilding efforts are being led by Northshore Disaster Recovery Inc. Northshore is one of the stations of the Louisiana United Methodist Disaster Recovery Ministry, funded by the United Methodist Committee on Relief. The staff provides case management and construction support for households in St. Tammany and Washington parishes and serves as the long-term recovery organization for St. Tammany Parish. Nearly 90 organizations are part of the station, including 40 faith-based organizations, 27 civic organizations and various government liaison representatives. Organizations contribute financial resources, volunteers, housing, construction materials and warehousing. Northshore director Dale Kimball recently returned from a volunteer-recruiting trip to six states. He received commitments from 28 teams in addition to the three long-term volunteer groups who re-signed and committed to send volunteers each week for the next calendar year. "Volunteers are our most important resource," Kimball said. "We must continue recruiting for the long term."

Bus Provides Immediate Post-Disaster Daycare (Disaster News Network, 10/2)

At first glance in a disaster area, it may seem like an incongruous sight. A large bus painted bright yellow and black with the smiling face of a young boy on the side giving a two thumbs up sign. "CJ's Bus," announces large lettering on the side of the vehicle. "A safe haven for children in disaster." "Kids know this bus is for them," says Kathryn Martin, who has spent the last year working to make the bus – named for her 2-year-old son who was killed in a tornado Nov. 6, 2005 in Evansville, Ind. – a reality. "Kids are drawn to it. They want to go on the 'happy boy's bus.'" Martin said the bus was the first disaster response mobile day care unit in the nation. Other groups, including faith-based organizations, normally utilize buildings in disaster areas to provide child care in the weeks after an event. Her goal is to be able to have the 40-foot bus – one of several she eventually hopes will be built – go to disaster areas to provide immediate assistance for children whose parents are struggling to cope in the aftermath of a catastrophe.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Campaign promotes disaster training (Marin Independent Journal, 10/7)

It's not a golf tournament. It's not a wine-tasting fundraiser. It's disaster-preparedness tailored to the busiest Marin resident. Bright yellow signs affixed to schools, fire stations and roadside fences have appeared by the hundreds from Stinson Beach to San Rafael imploring Marin to "get ready" for the next earthquake, flood, fire, landslide or other natural disaster. "We want people to say, 'Hey, what's going on? What are we supposed to do?'" said Laurie Nilsen, emergency services coordinator for Belvedere and Tiburon. "It's supposed to be eye-catching because we want people to be prepared." Free and just two hours long, the program founded in Southern Marin featuring everything you need to know about saving yourself in a disaster is now available in every city in Marin. Information on "Get Ready Marin" classes is available by calling 485-3131 or visiting www.getreadymarin.org. Money to pay for classes, and the massive publicity campaign - featuring banners, signs, posters, Golden Gate Transit bus advertisements, cocktail napkins, cable television public service announcements and even an airplane with a

trailing banner - comes from more than \$200,000 in federal and state Department of Homeland Security grants and \$20,000 from the Board of Supervisors. "This thing is just snowballing - it's just incredible," Corte Madera Fire Chief Bob Fox said. Modeled after the successful program launched on the Tiburon peninsula in spring 2006, the classes were developed by Belvedere resident Dr. Thomas Cromwell after he returned from the medical trenches of Hurricane Katrina.

New Committee to Help with TX Recovery (KTEN.Com, 10/5)

The severe flooding in June caused major damage to parts of the area. Grayson County was declared a federal disaster area, making it eligible for relief. But for some, waiting on government assistance is not an option. KTEN's Jhen Kordela has what's being done now. Various organizations from our community have teamed together to form a volunteer committee. Members are spending their off hours working well into the night to help flood victims get their lives back on track. David Cortinas works full time as the president of United Way. Since June, he's spent his time off nailing up sheet rock, re-doing Sherman houses. He's also part of a newly formed group called the Grayson Disaster Relief Committee made up of ministers, the Texoma Council of Governments and the city of Sherman. That group, plus the Christian reformed world relief committee is setting up shop in Sherman next week to help out with what flood victims need now. It's estimated that nearly 1,000 Sherman residents who sought relief from FEMA are currently not getting help.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

FL flooding strands motorists, closes school, and more (Florida Times Union, 10/4)

It rained so hard that dozens of Jacksonville residents of apartments in Mandarin and Arlington had to be relocated because of water seeping into their homes. Jacksonville Emergency Preparedness Chief Lorin Mock said that police and firefighters were driving around flooded areas making drive-by damage assessments, and that the city had verified that seven businesses, 49 apartment units and 10 houses had received flood damage only halfway through the assessment. Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department spokesman Tom Francis said the usual low-lying streets were flooded Tuesday night, requiring the rescue of about 10 motorists. JEA also reported about 3,000 customers were out of power at some point in the day. In St. John's County, heavy rain caused the elementary school to close. High waters also forced many area residents to stay home or find alternate routes out of their neighborhoods. Staff at Westminster Woods, a retirement community, had to help relocate some of the community's 300 residents to common areas after several rooms flooded.

President Declares Major Disaster For Texas (FEMA, 10/2)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Texas to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by Tropical Storm Erin during the period of August 14-20, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for the state of Texas by President Bush. The President's action makes federal funding available to affected

individuals in Bexar, Harris, Jones, Kendall, Medina, and Taylor counties. The assistance, to be coordinated by FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all tribes and counties within the state. Paulson named Kenneth Clark as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Clark said that damage surveys are continuing in other areas, and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are complete.

Officials assess tornado damage in central Iowa (Associated Press, 10/2)

Officials were inspecting damage Monday from a tornado that cut a 20-mile long path across four central Iowa counties. The tornado dropped out of storms that developed late Sunday afternoon, bringing high wind, heavy rain and large hail to the area. The tornado formed north of Pella in Marion County and moved into Mahaska County before sweeping into Jasper and Poweshiek counties, said Craig Cogil, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Des Moines. He said a second, smaller tornado also touched down in Poweshiek County. Jasper County was the hardest hit with at least three homes sustaining major structural damage and eight others sustaining moderate damage, Sheriff Mike Balmer said. Jim Sparks, the county's emergency management coordinator, said the storm also caused extensive damage to at least eight farmsteads, with grain bins, barns and machine sheds being destroyed. Sparks said he had not yet determined an estimate of damage. "It's going to be awhile before I can get a dollar amount," he said.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Disaster site translates to increased awareness (The Virginian-Pilot, 10/6)

State emergency officials have translated a wide range of information to help the growing population of Spanish-speaking Virginians prepare for disasters, particularly hurricanes. ListoVirginia.gov , as the new Web site is called, mirrors ReadyVirginia.gov , an English-language site with information on disaster readiness. In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks , the new site deals with more than natural disasters - one section covers "terrorismo ." "With Hurricane Katrina, it was a wake-up call for everyone in emergency management that more had to be done to reach Hispanic Virginians," Marc LaFountain , a spokesman for the state Department of Emergency Management , said Friday. Listo Virginia came online last month . The state is publicizing the site now to coincide with Hispanic Heritage Month , which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 . The Listo Virginia effort includes public awareness spots that can be downloaded from the site, as well as information about gathering materials for emergency kits and reaching agencies. "It behooves us, in an emergency, that people feel they are being serviced and we provide them with the tools to be safe," said Beatriz Amberman , vice chairwoman of the Virginia Latino Advisory Board . Having the information translated also benefits Virginians who are bilingual but have a stronger grasp of Spanish, she said. Activists estimate that as many as a third of the state's more than 400,000 Latino residents don't speak English,

according to The Associated Press . On Friday, the state's new site drew praise from Augusto Ratti-Angulo , editor and publisher of the Norfolk-based El Eco de Virginia . The weekly Spanish-language newspaper is distributed in Hampton Roads, Richmond and Northern Virginia.

Record Participation in Preparedness Month (Government Technology, 10/5)

DHS announced that a record number of national, regional, state, and local organizations participated in its fourth annual National Preparedness Month (NPM). More than 1,800 NPM coalition members coordinated at least 1,000 events and activities across America, reaching individuals, families, and diverse communities with the message of emergency preparedness. "This coordinated effort helps to serve as an important reminder to millions of individuals to take steps to prepare," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "The large involvement from the public in National Preparedness Month 2007 reinforces the fact that a greater proportion of Americans are recognizing the need for personal responsibility in preparing for emergencies before they happen. However, this preparedness message must continue year-round to everyone in America." DHS's Citizen Corps and its program partners offered preparedness trainings and education, as well as opportunities for citizens to engage in efforts in their local communities. For the first time, National Preparedness Month was broken into four theme areas.

Talk of federal buyout roils lives in coastal MS (LA Times, 10/2)

Bay St. Louis is on the front line of a project to gauge support for a mass federal buyout of 17,000 homes near Mississippi's Katrina-ravaged shore. This could become the nation's most significant attempt to radically reconfigure coastal communities -- converting huge swaths of flood-prone residential lots to public wetlands. Until now, the Army Corps of Engineers has reserved buyouts for areas prone to river flooding. Some people, such as Susan I. Rees, the director of the corps project, believe the current assessment is the beginning of a serious national debate on whether Americans should retreat from the coasts. The costs and risks of future flooding are simply too great, they say -- especially if, as many believe, sea levels are rising and hurricanes are starting to get stronger. "People have been talking about this for some time now, but no one has really said you don't need to live on the coast anymore," Rees said. "The whole concept of trying to remove people and properties from the coast is very, very challenging. The desire to live by the water is strong." The plan, which officials stress would be voluntary, has shocked many in Bay St. Louis, which is struggling to rebuild after Katrina. Residents say they had no idea that while they were taking out loans and investing their savings to rebuild their homes, federal officials were drawing up proposals to erase more than half of the city's land mass. "It's just aggravating," said Desiree Clark, 28, a nursing student whose almost-rebuilt house on pilings is waiting only to be covered in vinyl siding. "If we had known there was going to be a buyout, would we have shoveled all that mud out of our home?"

Forecasters Predict Two More Atlantic Hurricanes (Disaster News Network, 10/2)

Four more named storms - including two hurricanes with one of them "major" - were forecast Tuesday for the last two months of the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season by

researchers at Colorado State University. "We are forecasting a very active October-November . . ." said well-known forecasters William Gray and Philip Klotzbach. "Our well above-average prediction for October-November activity is largely due to the emergence of a now moderate La Nina event during the last two months," they said. Of the storms predicted for the rest of the hurricane season, they said one hurricane would be a major Category 3 with winds of more than 110 mph. Their latest update raised to 17 the number of named storms expected during the hurricane season, which runs June 1 to Nov. 30. Of those, it said seven would become hurricanes. Earlier predictions had ranged from 14 to 17 named storms with seven to nine of them becoming hurricanes. There have been 13 named storms in the Atlantic this season. Four of them – Dean, Felix, Humberto and Lorenzo – became hurricanes. Dean and Felix were both Category 5 storms, the highest level on the Saffir-Simpson scale of hurricane strength.

Survey Focuses on Preparedness for Kids in Disasters (Disaster News Network, 10/2)

Emergency medical response services in the United States are poorly prepared in a disaster to deal with children, who are the most vulnerable during a catastrophic event, according to a new survey. "Although children are among the most vulnerable in the event of disaster, there are substantial deficiencies in the preparedness plans of pre-hospital emergency medical services agencies in the United States for the care of children in a mass-casualty event," the survey said. "Children are among the most vulnerable in a disaster situation; planning for their care should be a major priority of the emergency care system," it said. Physicians conducting the survey said events such as school shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999 and at Westside Middle School in Arkansas a year earlier, as well as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, showed the need to focus on disaster response for children. A nationwide survey of 1,808 responders revealed that while nearly 73 percent had a written plan to respond to a mass-casualty event, only 13 percent had a plan specifically geared to deal with children. A majority, 69 percent, lacked plans for a mass-casualty event at a school. "Although most (69.3 percent) agencies reported participation in a local or regional disaster drill in the past year, fewer than half of those that participated in drills (49 percent) included pediatric victims," the survey said. It said few responders had copies of some or all of the evacuation plans for schools in their service area.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

FEMA changes elevation policy (New Orleans Times Picayune, 10/7)

FEMA is expected to announce soon that Road Home applicants who have already elevated their houses will be eligible for reimbursement. It would be a major about-face for FEMA, which has said for months that regulations wouldn't let it give money for elevation work to homeowners who had already begun the process. But in the wake of stories about Hurricane Katrina victims who were ruled ineligible for aid because they took the initiative to rebuild and elevate their homes too soon, FEMA's policy may change after all. Butch Kinerney, a spokesman for FEMA's national hazard mitigation program, said last week that agency policy requires environmental and historical property reviews and proof that each rebuilding project is cost-effective before it can release

portions of the \$1.1 billion that Louisiana wants to give Road Home applicants to help them elevate. It's a significant turnaround for FEMA, which has often claimed to be powerless to modify its disaster recovery policies to confront the unprecedented scope of Katrina's destruction. It may also embolden Louisiana leaders who often seemed to be spinning their wheels by complaining that FEMA should be able to override or change restrictive policies.

GAO says La. due more to build Katrina cottages (The Advocate, 10/5)

Louisiana was shortchanged in funding for a pilot program to build so-called Katrina Cottages as a disaster-housing alternative, the investigative arm of Congress concluded. The GAO, in a report issued earlier this week, said the state could have received almost double the \$74.5 million it has been slated had the agency overseeing the program used a more fair formula. FEMA in December awarded \$388 million that Congress authorized for disaster-housing alternatives to travel trailers and mobile homes. Mississippi received \$281.3 million or 73 percent of the award for two projects. Louisiana got the \$74.5 million to fund one project. The rest of the money went to Alabama and Texas. Gov. Kathleen Blanco and the congressional delegation cried foul, noting that Louisiana suffered more than three times the housing damage in hurricanes Katrina and Rita than Mississippi. The GAO finding was similar to a report issued earlier this year by the DHS inspector general.