

Disaster News Update –September 10 to 16, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, New York, West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia
- **Explosion:** Mississippi
- **Fire:** Washington, Oregon, California, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Carolina, Georgia, North Dakota
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Oklahoma, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi
- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm:** Texas, Louisiana
- **Storm Surge:** Alaska
- **Structure Fire:** Missouri, Tennessee

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/14)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornado (9/7)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (9/7)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornado (8/31)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/31)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/30)
- [Nebraska](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/29)
- [Ohio](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/27)
- [Wisconsin](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/26)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (8/24)
- [Minnesota](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/23)
- [Minnesota](#): Bridge Collapse (8/21 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Texas](#): Hurricane Dean (8/18 – Emergency Declaration)
- Fire Declarations: [Oregon \(9/3\)](#), [Idaho \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho2 \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho \(8/29\)](#), [Montana \(8/19\)](#), [Hawaii \(8/17\)](#), [Montana \(8/16\)](#), [Hawaii \(8/14\)](#), [Wyoming \(8/12\)](#),

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

ARC and FedEx Collaborate to Help Businesses Prepare (Business Wire, 9/13)

A national survey of small businesses conducted by the American Red Cross and FedEx Corp. found that while 94 percent of small business owners believe there is a potential for a disaster to seriously disrupt their business within the next two years, only 43 percent feel prepared for a one week disruption of their business, and 22 percent feel prepared for a one month disruption. Importantly, many businesses do want to become better prepared, with almost a quarter of respondents indicating they are planning on taking steps to prepare their businesses for disaster. Based on these findings, the American Red Cross and FedEx Corp. will create tools to help small businesses get prepared. FedEx and the Red Cross have been working together to examine small business disaster

preparedness because of the important role small businesses play in the national and global economy, as well as the safety and strength of the communities in which they are located. "Having responded to more than 75,000 disasters nationwide last year, we've seen first hand how businesses with trained employees, protected resources and plans for operational continuity can decrease the physical and financial impact of a disaster, and lessen the burden on first responders," said Darlene Sparks Washington, Director of Preparedness for the American Red Cross. "All businesses should have a disaster plan, but for small businesses, being prepared can make a difference in being able to stay in business after a disaster." The survey data is especially relevant considering that one in four businesses do not reopen after a major disaster such as a flood, tornado or earthquake, according to the Institute for Business and Home Safety, and considering that small businesses account for more than 99 percent of businesses in the United States alone.

ARC Releases Two- Year Progress Report

Excerpt: "The devastation and the resulting needs were unfathomable. The storms affected approximately 90,000 square miles, destroying or severely damaging more than 350,000 residences. Hundreds of thousands of people turned to the Red Cross for help, and we responded by:

- Opening nearly 1,400 evacuation shelters in 27 states and the District of Columbia, with overnight stays totaling more than 3.8 million.
- Sheltering nearly 450,000 evacuees.
- Serving more than 68 million hot meals and snacks to evacuees and responders.
- Providing emergency assistance to more than 1.4 million families—about four million people. This helped hurricane survivors purchase urgently needed items such as food, clothing, diapers and other essentials."

View the Report: http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont6989_lang0_2850.pdf

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Richmond holds disaster survival training session (Richmond Times (VA), 9/16)
Surviving the next major storm that hits Richmond -- or the first terrorist attack -- isn't guaranteed, but the right equipment and practical knowledge can make it more likely. Yesterday about 160 people attended the first "Survivor Day" training session hosted at the Landmark Theater by the Richmond Office of Emergency Management. When they left the free training session, participants had a better idea of what to do when everything goes wrong. They also had a new, red Red-Cross-approved backpack carrying items essential to help two people through three days. Benjamin W. Johnson, director of emergency services for the city, said he bought 4,000 of the backpacks from the Red Cross. He plans to hold one Survivor Day each quarter and intends to improve the program as it progresses. The next date has not been set. Those who attend will get a backpack. Johnson said he got the idea from what happened in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and closer to home in the neighborhoods around Battery Park a year ago. Many people would have fared much better if they had made preparations and knew what to do. Several people who attended yesterday asked

instructors questions about what they saw on TV happening to Katrina survivors. In the summing-up session at the end, Antoinette Essa, a member of Johnson's staff, asked if everyone had a good "Katrina session."

Fair urges emergency preparedness (Contra Costa Times, 9/14)

Walnut Creek is marking the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks this week with activities to help city employees, other agencies and the public prepare for emergencies. Simulating a flood emergency, the city teamed up with the American Red Cross on Tuesday to hold drills at City Hall and Heather Farm Community Center. "Nine days of rain led to some flooding in the Larkey Park area," said recreation supervisor Todd Trimble, who took the role of a shelter manager during the simulation. Flooding in the city a few years ago prompted this scenario, said Red Cross volunteer Rick Palmer, who heads the local group's "mass care" response team. Mock victims registered to stay in a Red Cross shelter set up in Heather Farm Park, and police and other city employees staffed Walnut Creek's emergency operations center in the police department downtown. Drill participants also included some residents who have taken Community Emergency Response Training classes.

SC ad campaign asks residents to prepare for disaster (Associated Press, 9/12)

South Carolina kicked off a new advertising campaign asking residents to be prepared in case a hurricane or other disaster strikes. The state plans to run ads for its "Be Ready! South Carolina" program on TV and radio stations as well as daily and weekly newspapers around the state. The ads will ask residents to put together a first-aid kit, have supplies on hand and prepare a plan for their families in case of a weather emergency, terrorist attack or other disaster. "No one should falsely believe that government agencies can do it all. It only takes a little time to make a plan and make a kit," said Earl Hunter, commissioner of the state Department of Health and Environmental Control. The campaign is tied to the DHS's National Preparedness Month, and is being funded by a grant from Homeland Security.

Disaster-Resistant Building Tips At Oklahoma State Fair (FEMA, 9/11)

Cotton Candy, carnival rides, prize-winning foods, quilts, livestock, and disaster-resistant building tips are coming to the Oklahoma State Fair. Specialists from FEMA will provide information on disaster-resistant building practices at the Oklahoma State Fair Sept. 13-23. Rebuilding or repairing a home after flooding or any disaster can be a daunting task. But with the right information, homeowners and business owners can build back in a way that reduces the likelihood of future damages. Mitigation specialists will be available at the Oklahoma State Fair. Information provided by FEMA's mitigation specialists will include:

- Effective techniques for cleaning up mold
- Relocating electrical systems above potential floodwater
- Elevating heating, cooling and water systems
- Installing backflow valves to prevent sewer backup
- The availability and benefits of flood insurance

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Humberto Damages/Needs Assessed (Disaster News Network, 9/16)

Officials in Texas and Louisiana continued assessing damages Sunday from Hurricane Humberto. In Texas, Gov. Ricky Perry declared a state of emergency for Jefferson, Orange and Galveston counties. The small community of High Island, Texas, is said to be hardest hit, with television images showing some homes with roofs torn off. Texas Baptist Men teams are assisting with debris removal there and one organization representative said the deployment is expected "to be a short term response." The storm made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 85 mph early Thursday. One Texas emergency management person said the damage could have been much worse from Humberto had it not come ashore in a sparsely populated area. The storm dumped 5 to 10 inches of rain across eastern Texas and much of Louisiana, causing some minor flooding.

CA Wildfires Prompt Evacuations (Disaster News Network, 9/16)

Residents of two mountain resort communities remained evacuated Sunday as an 18,000-acre wildfire moved closer. Officials evacuated more than 2,000 people from the communities of Green Valley Lake and Fawnskin in the San Bernardino National Forest Saturday. Evacuees were staying at two nearby high schools. Voluntary evacuations were in effect for parts of the Lucerne Valley. Several outbuildings were burned. High winds and low humidity fueled the fire which started Friday. The blaze is 12 percent contained and the cause was under investigation. Another wildfire in San Diego County threatened homes in the city of Julian. That wildfire is 20 percent contained. The evacuations come on the heels of the National Interagency Fire Center reporting that that "great suppression efforts" were made across the West. The number of wildfires burning across Western states had dropped dramatically in the past few weeks and firefighters reported major progress in containing those blazes. Favorable weather conditions aided firefighters in late August. The agency on Sept. 6 lowered the national preparedness level from 4 to 3. Late in the summer when dozens of fires were raging across the West, the level had reached a 5, its top rating.

President Declares Major Disaster for Iowa (FEMA, 9/14)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Iowa to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding during the period of August 17 to September 5, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said federal funding is available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe storms and flooding in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Calhoun, Cherokee, Davis, Humboldt, Mahaska, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Van Buren, Wapello, Wayne, and Webster counties. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all tribes and counties within the state. Paulison named Justin A. Dombrowski the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Dombrowski said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

Hurricane Humberto Strikes Texas, Louisiana (Associated Press, 9/14)

Some residents of Texas and Louisiana fired up generators to cut through the darkness after Hurricane Humberto sneaked up on the Gulf Coast, knocking out power to thousands and flooding streets before fizzling into a tropical depression. Humberto, the first hurricane to hit the U.S. in two years, steadily lost its punch Thursday after sloshing ashore in Texas as a stronger storm than initially expected and then dragging across Louisiana. One death was blamed on the storm. Early Friday, the remnants of Humberto took aim at Mississippi, where flood watches were in effect. Flood warnings were issued for portions of the Vermilion River in Louisiana. Texas Gov. Rick Perry declared three southeastern counties disaster areas. At one point, about 118,000 customers lost electricity in Texas and Louisiana. Forecasters didn't put out their first advisory on what became Humberto until almost midday Wednesday. It strengthened from a tropical depression with 35-mph winds to a hurricane with 85-mph winds in just 18 hours, said senior hurricane specialist James Franklin at the National Hurricane Center in Miami. Humberto made landfall early Thursday less than 50 miles from where Hurricane Rita did in 2005, and areas of southwest Louisiana not fully recovered from Rita braced for flooding.

Westchester County, NY Residents Still In Need (Disaster News Network, 9/12)

Nearly 100 cases remain for two organizations working on the long-term recovery in Westchester County, N.Y., after severe flooding in the spring. As the organizations move forward with the casework, getting residents prepared for future disasters was also being addressed. The Westchester Interfaith Interagency Network for Disaster and Emergency Recovery (WINDER) and the Hispanic Resource Center (HRC) in the city of Mamaroneck were still working with 37 and 48 cases, respectively. The two organizations work closely with each other, with faith groups and with other agencies around the county to meet the needs of residents still recovering. Andraya Dolbee, case coordinator for WINDER, said residents she was helping are mostly elderly or coping with special needs. Some were just coming forward now with basements still in need of major cleanup work.

Papers to get addresses of state's storm victims (Birmingham (AL) News, 9/10)

FEMA is notifying 200,125 Alabamians who applied for hurricane and disaster assistance that their addresses will be released to Florida newspapers that sued the federal agency for the information. FEMA said in a statement Friday that it will be sending letters or making phone calls to notify the people involved. The information is being released to comply with a federal court order. The federal appellate court order affects Alabamians who applied for assistance following 2004's Hurricane Ivan; severe storms, flooding and tornadoes in May 2003; and 1998's Hurricane Georges. Addresses of homes will be released. Names of applicants will not. The South Florida Sun-Sentinel, the Pensacola News-Journal and The News-Press of Fort Myers sought the information. FEMA had refused to release addresses under the personal privacy exemption to the Freedom of Information Act. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals on June 22 ordered FEMA to release the addresses.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

30 flood-prone LA homes to be elevated (The Advocate, 9/15)

Thirty homes in Jefferson Parish that have flooded repeatedly will be elevated as a result of \$5.6 million in federal hazard mitigation funds approved Thursday by the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. The homes are on the severe repetitive loss list and have received multiple National Flood Insurance Program flood insurance claims. "These elevations will help to break the cycle of flood-repair-flood by offering a permanent solution," LRA board member and former Jefferson Parish President Tim Coulon said. Earlier in the week, the state approved \$4.2 million in funding that will be used to raise another 30 homes in Jefferson. "Once these structures are rebuilt with a higher first floor, flood waters will flow under rather than through them - thereby reducing the potential for these structures to sustain repetitive flood damage in the future," Col. Jeff Smith, acting GOHSEP director, said. "Because we are all in the same insurance pools, that's good news for us all." The National Flood Insurance Program defines severe repetitive loss homes as homes that have suffered damages of \$1,000 or more on at least four occasions or suffered damages of more than 50 percent of their value on two or more occasions. Some 1,700 homes - or about a third of the severely and repetitively damaged homes in the country - are in Louisiana.

Federal disaster management plan running into criticism (GovExec.Com, 9/13)

A proposed federal plan to react to such disasters as the Sept. 11, attacks or Hurricane Katrina came under fire Tuesday from emergency response experts who said the proposal needs revision. The broad-scale attacks on the National Response Framework put together by the Homeland Security Department and Federal Emergency Management Agency came at a hearing of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Economic Development Subcommittee. "It is not rocket science and it does not have to be 800 pages long," said Robert Bohlmann of the International Association of Emergency Managers. "The draft NRF that we have reviewed appears to be more like a public relations document rather than a response plan or framework," Bohlmann told the panel.

DHS Releases National Preparedness Guidelines (DHS, 9/13)

DHS announced publication of two important tools to organize and synchronize national efforts to strengthen preparedness: (1) the National Preparedness Guidelines, which establish a vision for national preparedness and provide a systematic approach for prioritizing preparedness efforts across the Nation; and (2) the Target Capabilities List, which describes the collective national capabilities required to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies. Publication of the Guidelines and Target Capabilities List fulfills a major component of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8, "National Preparedness," and establishes a framework for understanding what it means for the nation to be prepared for all hazards. There are four critical elements to the National Preparedness Guidelines: The national preparedness vision, which provides a concise statement of the core preparedness goal for

the nation. The fifteen National Planning Scenarios, which collectively depict the broad range of natural and man-made threats facing our nation and guide overall homeland security planning efforts at all levels of government and with the private sector. They form the basis for national planning, training, investments and exercises needed to prepare for emergencies of all types. Universal Task List (UTL), which is a menu of some 1,600 unique tasks that can facilitate efforts to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from the major events that are represented by the National Planning Scenarios.

New NRP Reiterates Local Control of Disaster Response (GovExec.Com, 9/11)
State officials will step in and help local communities if they are overwhelmed during a disaster according to a new DHS plan that tries to clarify who's in charge during emergencies, but local officials remain in charge of the response before, during and after disasters. The department's new plan specifies who's in charge of what. For instance, state government's role is to "supplement local efforts before, during and after incidents." This has always been the state's job during disasters, said an administration official familiar with the revisions, but it was never clearly stated in national plans until now. Katrina revealed other problems in the country's ability to respond to disasters. Michael D. Brown, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the time, was ultimately fired for his response to the hurricane. Among Brown's alleged missteps was his belief that he should report directly to the president during disasters -- which created confusion about responsibility. While this was once the protocol, that changed when FEMA became part of the Homeland Security Department -- and that was not clearly spelled out in the old plan. But the new framework still doesn't make the lines of reporting entirely clear. The plan overview says the president "leads the federal government response effort," and it leaves the "overall coordination" and implementation of managing the disaster to the Homeland Security secretary. It designates the FEMA chief as the Homeland Security secretary's "principal adviser for matters relating to emergency management." Local emergency managers who have seen a draft of the new plan have been critical of the revisions and say they were left out of the writing process altogether. While many said the original plan was too long, they now say the new document is too short -- the overview is less than 80 pages and there are more than 500 pages in annexes. The annexes include more detailed information, such as on evacuating pets in emergencies, which was not addressed in the original.

Draft National Response Framework Released For Public Comment (FEMA, 9/10)
DHS has released the draft *National Response Framework*, successor to the National Response Plan, for a 30-day public comment period. The *Framework*, which focuses on response and short-term recovery, articulates the doctrine, principles and architecture by which the United States prepares for and responds to all-hazard disasters across all levels of government and all sectors of communities. The *Framework* is intended for senior elected and appointed leaders, such as federal agency heads, state governors, mayors, tribal leaders and city managers. Simultaneously, it informs emergency management practitioners by explaining the operating structures and tools routinely used by first responders and emergency managers at all levels of government. "The *Framework* recognizes that most incidents are managed locally," DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff

said. "But when needed to support state and local officials as they respond to a disaster, the *Framework* establishes the playbook for the federal coordination of resources and assets to manage disasters of all sizes and scope." In addition to the core *Framework*, supporting documents, including Emergency Support Functions, Support and Incident Annexes and other appendices have also been updated, expanded and remain an integral part of the *Framework*. These documents are available at the newly-created NRF Resource Center, which is available online at www.fema.gov/nrf/.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Crisis Counseling Still Available to Hurricane Victims (FEMA, 9/12)

Many Louisiana residents continue to cope with the psychological aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Free crisis counseling is available through Louisiana Spirit and a partnership between the state of Louisiana and FEMA. "The concerns being raised by hurricane survivors now, two years after the disasters are especially hard to deal with. Many express feeling depressed, anxious, irritable, angry and frustrated, making work and family life more difficult," said Louisiana Spirit Executive Director Charles G. Cook, LSW. "Louisiana Spirit counselors help by talking through these normal emotions, so that important decisions can be made with a clear head, and family and friends can enjoy each other's company." Anxiety, despair and depression are common emotions experienced by both children and adults following Katrina and the devastating floods. These feelings are compounded by the stress of living in a new environment, starting a new job or school and the struggle to rebuild. LA Spirit can help you and your family cope. One call to the Louisiana Spirit 24 Hour Helpline (1-800-273-TALK) will put you in contact with professionally trained counselors who are available to provide emotional support, counseling, information and referrals by phone or face to face. Crisis counseling is free, confidential and available to those who lived in the area affected by hurricanes Katrina or Rita. LA Spirit has 680 staff members working across the state. Their mission is to "offer crisis counseling that empowers Louisiana hurricane survivors to build resilience, recover and move towards self sufficiency." To date, they have served nearly 1.1 million victims of Katrina and Rita and handed out over 7 million resources.

Some Mississippi coast families plagued by black mold (Associated Press, 9/11)

Despite cleanup efforts, some Jackson County homes still have mold festering behind walls and under leaky windows two years after Hurricane Katrina." It's growing. It's in the vents and the walls. It makes you itch all over," said Perry Fountain. Though she scrubbed her floors and walls with bleach repeatedly, her garage walls became coated from the inside out with black mold after Katrina flooded her Moss Point home on Aug. 29, 2005. Mold can grow anywhere that is damp and warm and can feed on wood, wallboard, upholstery and dust. After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sponsored a study on mold prevention strategies and the possible health effects of mold contamination. The study, released in July 2006, said that the amount of flooding caused by the storms made a massive mold contamination a certainty, and residents were told to air out their homes and clean the possibly infected areas with bleach. Even if a home did not flood, a leaking pipe, window or foundation

could allow enough moisture for mold to grow. Homeowners should inspect ceiling tiles, drywall and ventilation systems for mold growth, the CDC study said.