

Disaster News Update –December 30, 2006 to January 5, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Arizona
- **Fire:** Oklahoma, Kentucky
- **Ice Storm:** Nebraska
- **Severe Snowstorm:** Colorado
- **Structure Fire:** Massachusetts
- **Tornado:** Texas

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/29)
- [Oregon](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (12/29)
- [Illinois](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration (12/29))
- [Washington](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides (12/12)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms, Flooding (12/12)
- [Alaska](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides (12/8)
- Fire Declarations: [California](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Bus will entertain kids after disasters (New Orleans Times Picayune, 01/04)

Families in St. Tammany Parish and other Gulf Coast areas would benefit -- in the case of another disaster -- from an entertaining bus that will bring free, safe child care to devastated areas as an initiative touted by an Indiana tornado survivor and other supporters, including one Slidell volunteer. Erik Kreppein, fire inspector for St. Tammany Fire Protection District 1, is an advisory board member for CJ's Bus Foundation, a nonprofit organization raising money to build, operate and maintain the customized bus from its base in Evansville, Ind.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Churches take in marooned motorists (Rocky Mountain News, 12/30)

Storm closed roads in southeastern Colorado on Friday, sending several hundred stranded motorists to churches in Springfield to wait out the storm. "We have over 100 people in shelters, plus another 100 people staying in their trucks," said Riley Frazee, director of Baca County's Emergency Management division.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Crisis looms in snowed-in SE Colorado (Rocky Mountain News, 01/04)

The weather cooperated with Colorado National Guard troops dropping bales of hay from helicopters to stranded and starving cattle, but state officials worry the snow is covering a disaster of epic proportions. Gov. Bill Owens wrote President Bush asking him to authorize federal funds for the rescue and recovery of livestock and also asked for help through the USDA, SBA and FEMA.

54 left homeless in MA by fast-moving fire (Boston Globe, 01/04)

A high school gymnasium was the temporary refuge yesterday for some of the 54 people left homeless after a fire destroyed one of seven luxury apartment buildings in a recently built complex in Georgetown, about 30 miles north of Boston.

Race to find, feed cattle swirls across Colo. Ranches (Denver Post, 01/04)

National Guard troops, ranchers and a legion of volunteers launched helicopters, a C-130 cargo plane and ground posses over snow-socked southeastern Colorado on Wednesday, the third day of a desperate effort to save blizzard-bound livestock. Prowers County Sheriff Jim Faull said a roof collapsed Tuesday on a barn that housed 20,000 hogs about 12 miles north of Holly. He did not know how many animals perished.

NE Governor requests expedited Federal assistance (SW Nebraska News, 01/04)

Gov. Heineman submitted a formal request to President Bush for an expedited disaster declaration from the federal government following winter storms that have severely damaged public power utilities' ability to deliver power to thousands of Nebraskans. Preliminary damage estimates from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and public power utilities indicate at least \$58 million in damages to public infrastructure.

TX Governor Declares Disaster Areas (Associated Press, 01/04)

Gov. Perry designated Johnson and Limestone counties as disaster areas, the first step toward state assistance to help recover from deadly tornadoes that struck Friday. About 60 homes and two businesses were damaged in Limestone County, and about 40 homes and one business in Johnson County, local officials said.

Bush Grants MO Request for Disaster Assistance (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 01/04)

Local and state officials are meeting to continue the process of seeking federal reimbursement for millions of dollars in damages stemming from storms that hit Missouri between Nov. 30 and Dec. 2. The meeting is one of a series of briefings to be held around the state following President Bush's Federal Disaster Declaration for nine Missouri counties and the city of St. Louis.

Kansas to ask for Federal Assistance (DodgeCity.Com, 01/04)

The state is turning to the federal government for help in recovering from last week's winter storm, which left about 60,000 western Kansas residents without electrical power and threatened millions of cattle. The state is doing what it can to help people recover from the storm, but it needs federal assistance.

NE electrical grid 'devastated' by storm (Omaha World Herald, 01/04)

Central Nebraska must rebuild much of its electrical grid because of last weekend's ice storm -- a task that could take months, if not a year or more, utility officials say. In the meantime, utility crews continue to work 16-hour days to bring customers back online. Despite that effort, some areas will remain without power for another week to 10 days. Remote homes may be without power for up to a month.

Denver Storm Costs: \$9.6 Million and counting (Rocky Mountain News, 01/04)

The back-to-back holiday storms have cost Denver's public works and aviation departments a combined \$9.6 million so far, according to preliminary and partial estimates released this morning. The cost estimates are through Jan. 1, which means the total cost for the two storms will be higher once figures are finalized.

Winter Storm Affects Thousands (Disaster News Network, 01/01)

Thousands are without power in the wake of a severe winter storm, more than 44,000 in Kansas. Fifteen-foot snow drifts blanketed parts of that state, and emergency crews were estimating it could be a week before power is restored. Emergency shelters were set up in several western and central Kansas counties. Some 15,000 people were in the dark in Nebraska. Albuquerque got two feet of snow, while 18 inches fell in the Oklahoma Panhandle. After dumping heavy snow on Colorado, the storm moved into the Plains states on Monday. Rain was pouring from Florida to New York, with snow in parts of New England. The huge storm once stretched from Canada to Mexico.

Tornadoes Move from TX to LA (Disaster News Network, 12/30)

A storm system swept across Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, unleashing tornadoes and heavy rain. Tornado watches and flash-flood watches extended across much the state on Saturday. On Friday, tornadoes in central Texas killed one person, injured 12 others, and caused what local officials are describing as "widespread damage" in rural areas around Waco.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

GAO: Evacuation of Disabled Required (Homeland Security Monitor, 01/05)

"Federal law requires that state and local governments with mass evacuation plans incorporate special needs populations into their plans," but "this requirement does not necessarily ensure the incorporation of all transportation-disadvantaged populations," according to the Government Accountability Office.

NM Governor Seeks Disaster Relief (Charlotte Business Journal, 01/04)

With apologies to playwright William Congreve, some New Mexicans might say Mother Nature "hath plenty of fury" judging from the perfect storm that walloped the state last week with record-breaking snowfalls. Gov. Bill Richardson most likely agrees because he's working with local and federal agricultural officials to request a disaster declaration from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

NHC Director Believes Bigger Hurricanes To Come (LA Times, 01/03)

National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield ends his 34-year government career with an unwelcome message: Hurricane Katrina was nothing compared with the big one yet to come. Mayfield, 58, leaves his high-profile job with the NWS more convinced than ever that U.S. residents are risking unprecedented tragedy by continuing to build vulnerable homes in the tropical storm zone and failing to plan escape routes.

Hawaii Lawmakers Propose Preparedness Fund (KITV, 01/03)

State lawmakers want to create a special fund help pay for disaster preparedness measures like more emergency shelters across the state. A Big Island state representative wants to create a civil defense disaster preparedness special fund to, among other things, construct and retrofit buildings that could serve as emergency shelters.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

New Orleans Repeats Mistakes as it Rebuilds (Washington Post, 01/04)

By ones and twos, homeowners here are reinhabiting neighborhoods, even the most devastated ones, and many view their return as a triumph over adversity. But experts involved in the rebuilding believe that the helter-skelter return of residents to this low-lying metropolis may represent another potential disaster.

Relief far off for LA Homeowners (New Orleans Times Picayune, 01/04)

As the Road Home program for homeowners continues to grind through bureaucratic delays, a similar rental program, targeting the small-time landlords who have long dominated the New Orleans rental market, hasn't paid anyone and won't for months to come.

Homeowners Told to Watch for Scams (USA Today, 01/02)

Officials along the Gulf Coast are warning homeowners that they will likely face a wave of contractor scams in the coming months as they begin collecting billions of dollars in government grants to rebuild what Hurricane Katrina destroyed. Mississippi has hired six investigators to target schemes aimed at recipients. Louisiana will send out vans to warn consumers about scams and take complaints. Both states are filling the airwaves with warnings about common schemes.

Louisiana Faces Healthcare Professional Shortage

Louisiana faces a shortage of physicians and healthcare professionals as a result of the damage Hurricane Katrina did to teaching hospitals in New Orleans and to physicians' practices throughout the state. "We've lost a lot of physicians because of the hurricane. We're losing more because of the slow and ridiculous pace of the recovery," said Dave Tarver, executive vice president of the Louisiana State Medical Society.

New Orleans Still Recovering in 2007 (Reuters,12/31)

In New Orleans, 2007 begins much the same way 2006 did, with large swaths of the city still wrecked and abandoned after Hurricane Katrina, and local officials promising that better days lie just ahead. Sixteen months after Katrina flooded 80 percent of the city and killed more than 1,300 people, less than half of the pre-storm population of nearly half a million has returned.

Specialty insurers forecast to return (New Orleans Times Picayune, 12/31)

Specialty insurers that concentrate on unique or hard to insure properties could increase the number of policies they write in Louisiana next year, helping to ease the critically tight supply of insurance. The new policies likely will come at premium prices. Specialty insurers, sometimes referred to as surplus line carriers, tend to be more responsive to market fluctuations, swooping in to offer coverage in niche areas and when policies are especially hard to come by.

Levee Upgrade May Fall Short of Money (NO Times Picayune, 12/29)

After months of delays in determining the true cost of upgrading the region's levees, with more delays expected, USACE officials now fear they may not have enough money to pay for the improvements, the agency's director of civil works said Thursday. Maj. Gen. Don Riley won't be able to confirm the existence or extent of the financing gap until June, when officials are expected to put cost figures to plans for protecting the region from a once-in-100-year flood.