

Disaster News Update – February 10 to 16, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Texas, Minnesota, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri,
- **Ice:** Connecticut, Virginia
- **Severe Winter Weather:** New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Indiana, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Washington, DC, Nebraska, Missouri, Virginia, Vermont
- **Tornado:** Louisiana

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Washington](#): Severe Winter Storm, Landslides and Mudslides (2/14)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Winter Storm (2/9)
- [Florida](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (2/8)
- [Florida](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (2/3)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms (2/1)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms (2/1)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (1/15)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (Emergency Declaration (1/15))
- Fire Declarations: None in the last 30 days

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

AmeriCorps making mark in Tammany (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/15)

A team of 10 young adults from AmeriCorps in Charleston, S.C., will complete its service in Southeast Louisiana in mid-February and be followed by a second team to do similar work beginning Mardi Gras week. Team leader Stephanie Martinez of Orlando, Fla., said her group had previously been assigned to work in New Orleans to help clear debris and gut houses damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Through the Thanksgiving holiday, they have worked in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy at the Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve and Talisheek Pine Wetlands Preserve.

Church of Brethren Exec Committee Visits Gulf (Worldwide Faith News, 2/15)

The entire Executive Committee of the Church of the Brethren General Board is visiting Gulf coast areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, on a trip planned for Feb. 15-17. The group will meet with survivors, disaster relief volunteers, and staff of local longterm recovery organizations, and will visit the Disaster Child Care site at FEMA's Welcome Home Center in New Orleans, as well as the Brethren Disaster Response rebuilding sites in Pearl River and St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana, and in Lucedale, Miss. The trip was organized to provide the Executive Committee with a broad overview of the church's Emergency Response program, and to prompt discussion of key issues related to disaster response and recovery.

Red Cross to open supply depot in PB (Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 2/13)

The American Red Cross announced that it will open Arkansas' first disaster field-supply center Wednesday in Pine Bluff. The 28,000-square-foot warehouse at 223 Mulberry St. will store cots, food and other materials for use in an emergency. The center will be the 30th of its kind in the country, the Red Cross said, and will serve Arkansas and other states in case of a disaster.

ROTC Students Teach Seniors To Be Prepared (Tampa Tribune, 2/10)

ROTC youths take their PowerPoint presentation to retirement centers and teach lessons about hurricane readiness. Using grant money and assistance from local agencies, the ROTC students put together a PowerPoint presentation on hurricane preparedness that included a history of America's deadliest hurricanes, computer animation of the damage hurricanes can cause to a house and evacuation tips. This is a project that took the students beyond the classroom walls. Each month, they will present their hurricane preparedness to senior citizens at Community Aging and Retirement Services centers.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

CT CERT Program Teaches Pet Preparedness (Zwire, 2/15)

In an effort to learn more about how to protect animals during crisis, the Woodbridge community emergency response team or CERT presented a seminar about animal emergency rescue efforts in Connecticut on Feb 10. The seminar was led by Goldman, the executive director of CTSART or the Connecticut state animal rescue team. CTSART was formed in an effort to create the ability to "prepare, plan, respond and recover animals in an emergency situation." Thirty-four other states in the nation have started SART efforts to deal with animal evacuations. In fact, a bill put into effect this past year requires that all states have a plan for dealing with animals during disasters.

USGS Announces foreign-lang. Earthquake guide (Government Technology, 2/15)

The USGS announced the release of two new publications, both titled, "Protecting Your Family from Earthquakes--The Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety." One is written in Spanish, with an accompanying English translation, and the other is translated into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, also with an accompanying English translation. The new publications are available online at pubs.usgs.gov/gip/2007/41 and pubs.usgs.gov/gip/2007/42/

Seattle SNAP Program Teaches Preparedness (Zwire, 2/15)

A series of free classes is being offered through the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to help neighborhoods prepare for an unexpected emergency or disaster, with a session scheduled Tuesday, Feb. 20, at the Magnolia Community Center. Seattle Neighborhoods Actively Prepare, or SNAP, is a new program designed to help individuals and neighborhoods plan and prepare for potential emergencies, such as the December windstorms that left many Seattle residents without electricity for more than a week.

Brooklyn Religious Centers Prepare for Disasters (Canarsie Digest, 2/15)

They're a huge part of people's lives, so why not involve churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship in disaster preparedness? Such thinking spurred the creation of a Web site devoted to providing religious institutions, schools, and service providers with information about how to aid congregants in times of crisis and offer assistance during rebuilding efforts after a disaster. "This technology will build untold capacity for changing the way faith-based disaster planning and recovery management is done," Peter Gudaitis, CEO and executive director of New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS), said at a press conference at Borough Hall to announce the opening of www.howcalm.org.

FL Survey Shows Personal Preparedness Improved (Tallahassee.Com, 2/14)

People in Leon County appear to be taking disaster preparedness more seriously now than they did about five years ago. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross has been surveying people in Leon and seven other Big Bend counties about preparedness. Survey results are ready for Leon County, and they're encouraging, said Chris Floyd, emergency-services director. In 2001, 45 percent of people surveyed said they have a family-disaster plan that includes two evacuation routes and emergency lodging arrangements. That number increased 54 percent last year. When asked whether they have a disaster-survival kit, only 29 percent said "yes" in 2001, compared to 43 percent last year.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

PA Governor Declares Disaster (PR Newswire, 2/16)

Governor Edward G. Rendell has declared a statewide disaster emergency to enable state, county and municipal governments to respond effectively to the snow storm that blanketed the state this week. "Weather conditions statewide continue to be hazardous, and PennDOT, the National Guard, State Police and PEMA are still working to remove heavy snow and ice that have blocked roadways," the Governor said. "They are also continuing to help motorists who have become stuck during the storm. The disaster proclamation authorizes state agencies to use all available resources and personnel as is deemed necessary to cope with the magnitude and severity of this situation. The time-consuming bid and contract procedures and formalities that are normally required by law are waived for the duration of the proclamation.

NY Disaster Hotline Activated (Empire State News, 2/16)

A toll-free Disaster Hotline is now available to help all New Yorkers hit by the recent snowstorms deal with insurance related issues, New York State Insurance Department Acting Superintendent Eric Dinallo announced Thursday. The Insurance Department had activated the hotline in response to Governor Eliot Spitzer's declaration of a State Disaster Emergency in Oswego, but extended it after Wednesday's snowstorm caused damage statewide. The Insurance Department's Disaster Hotline number is 1-800-339-

1759, with Consumer Services Bureau personnel available weekdays between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Storm Assistance Sought for SE Colorado (Denver Post, 2/16)

Gov. Bill Ritter asked for federal financial assistance Tuesday to offset livestock and agricultural losses across southeast Colorado caused by recent blizzards. Ritter did not ask for a specific amount. But any money would help with feeding and watering livestock stranded by the storms, locating and disposing of carcasses, and boosting the economic recovery for affected counties, said Ritter spokesman Evan Dreyer. The request is separate from the federal disaster declaration this month handed down by President Bush to help with costs of snow removal and emergency rescue.

WA Disaster Declaration for Public Facilities (Government Technology, 2/15)

Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire today announced that her request to President Bush for a federal disaster declaration for damage to public facilities has been approved. The federal declaration will provide significant aid to repair facilities damaged in the Dec. 14, 2006, and Dec. 15, 2006, windstorms.

Numb tornado victims picking up the pieces (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/15)

A day after two tornadoes carved three deep scars across the metro area, a storm-hardened metro New Orleans quickly began clearing away the damage. In Westwego, Uptown, Carrollton and Gentilly, good Samaritans on Wednesday jumped to help their battered neighbors. Scores of huge utility trucks clogged whole blocks to restring downed power lines. And paid contractors summoned on short notice clambered over torn roofs, making temporary repairs. In one hard-hit Uptown neighborhood centered at the intersection of Freret and Fern streets, homeowners issued instructions over the whine of power saws and the rumble of generators keeping refrigerators chilling.

Statewide Emergency Declared in Virginia (Government Technology, 2/13)

Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine declared a statewide emergency, directing state agencies to take all necessary actions to aid in the response to and recovery from severe winter weather forecast to arrive later today in northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley.

Tornado Hits New Orleans (Associated Press, 2/13)

A tornado tore the city's Gentilly neighborhood before daybreak Tuesday, flattening houses and FEMA trailers. At least 29 people were injured as the twister heaped more misery on neighborhoods still trying to recover from Katrina. The storm destroyed at least 50 FEMA trailers and dozens of homes, and damaged many others -- many of which were in various states of repair.

October cleanup to top \$22.6 million (Buffalo News, 2/13)

Amherst's cleanup bill from the freak October snowstorm is now expected to be at least \$22.6 million, Emergency Services Coordinator James Zymanek told Town Board members Monday. The good news: Federal and state agencies will pick up most of the expenses, Supervisor Satish B. Mohan reassured board members. Today, town officials

expect to submit about \$16.6 million in invoices for work already completed to federal and state emergency management officials, Zymanek told the Town Board at its weekly work session. The remaining bills for removal of dangerous trees from the town's right of ways, now estimated to total more than \$6 million, will be submitted later.

18 IL counties declared eligible for disaster funds (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 2/10)
FEMA announced Friday that federal disaster money is available in Illinois, following the November ice storm. The agency declared 18 Illinois counties eligible for the money, including Bond, Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Monroe and St. Clair. The Nov. 30 ice storm tore down tree limbs, knocked out power lines and left more than 600,000 metro-area customers in the dark.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Florida calling for catastrophe fund (LA Times, 2/14)
Frustrated by inaction in Washington, Florida officials this week are asking other states to join them in setting up an insurance catastrophe fund. If established, a multi-state fund would bail out regions hit by cataclysmic disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding and even terrorism. But unlike a national fund, which Congress has balked at creating, it wouldn't rely on the financial backing of the federal government.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Katrina Recovery Progressing (The Advocate, 2/15)
Roughly a year-and-a-half after the one-two punch of hurricanes Katrina and Rita wracked the coast, a composite picture in economist Loren Scott's latest chronicle of Gulf Coast recovery crystallizes what's working and what's not. In short, recovery is robust in some coastal locales, but New Orleans battles higher hurdles, according to Scott's fourth and final "Advancing in the Aftermath" study, commissioned by Capital One.

State Farm won't write new Mississippi policies (LA Times, 2/15)
The nation's largest residential insurer has said that it would stop selling new homeowners and commercial policies in Mississippi because of lawsuits and legislative saber-rattling over the company's handling of claims from Hurricane Katrina. The decision by State Farm Insurance is the latest by a major insurance company to reduce its risks by retreating from the nation's coastlines.

New federal rebuilding post sought (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/14)
The Louisiana Recovery Authority's top liaison to Washington said Tuesday that it is time for the White House to create a new federal post focused on rebuilding New Orleans that would augment the role handled by Donald Powell, the president's recovery coordinator for the entire Gulf Coast. In a strong indication of how some members of the state panel want to steer the next stage of the hurricane recovery, LRA board member

Kevin Reilly pointed to what he hoped would be the growing responsibility of the state-created New Orleans Redevelopment Authority to take the lead in rebuilding the city.

Road Home Checks to Start Arriving (The Advocate, 2/13)

A top manager of Louisiana's embattled Road Home' program told the state's hurricane recovery agency Monday that the number of people receiving checks for storm-damaged homes soon will be jumping noticeably. ICF International, the company running the \$7.5 billion program to get federal grant money to owners of severely damaged homes, has promised Gov. Kathleen Blanco that 2,300 applicants will be moved to the closing process by the end of the month. Mike Spletto, the Road Home senior housing manager at the state Office of Community Development, told the governor's Louisiana Recovery Authority during a meeting Monday at the State Capitol that he expects 6,000 closings in March, 8,000 in April and 10,000 per month after that.

Governor Wants N.O. Projects Reopened (Washington Post, 2/12)

Gov. Kathleen Blanco said Monday she wants to temporarily reopen the New Orleans public housing projects that have been closed since Hurricane Katrina, despite federal plans to demolish them. Hundreds of people protested the demolitions in January. Last week, a federal judge dismissed a claim that the plans discriminated against the projects' black residents, a move that housing authorities said cleared the way to raze the buildings. Blanco said the projects that can be repaired should be reopened to families who were driven out by Katrina floodwaters _ at least until the federal government gets closer to its goal of replacing them with new structures. The projects could help relieve the housing problem in the city and allow displaced residents to return home, she said.

Hundreds of Children Without Health Insurance (N.O. Times Picayune, 2/12)

In helping to dislodge thousands of children from public insurance rolls, Hurricane Katrina compounded one of the Louisiana's most intractable public policy dilemmas. Tens of thousands of children in the state have no health insurance even though government provides it at no cost for families earning up to two times the federal poverty mark. The state Department of Health and Hospitals estimates that three-fourths of the 97,000 children sliding by without health insurance are eligible for government coverage but have somehow eluded the social workers, school counselors and health providers endeavoring to sign them up.

Elevation Catch-22 hits homeowners (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/11)

Pat Fitzpatrick is rebuilding with rebar and concrete pilings, and he is raising the house another two to three feet, as required by the new FEMA flood advisory maps to maintain flood insurance coverage. When he's done, the house will be eight to nine feet off the ground. But Fitzpatrick is encountering opposition from an unlikely source: his insurance company. Allstate told him he's ineligible for homeowners insurance if he raises his home.

\$110B Relief Figure Not All It Seems (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/11)

In Katrina's wake, the White House and Congress have made a point of repeatedly noting that \$110B in federal aid had been dispatched to the Gulf Coast. But as the region

struggles to rebuild 18 months later, the figure has become something of a political curse, especially for Louisiana officials who say they have been consistently shortchanged and are back in the nation's capital looking for more. The LRA estimates that in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana alone sustained upwards of \$100 billion in losses, but hasn't gotten anywhere near that amount. Leger figures the state has \$34 billion in "uncompensated losses."

Waiving local match on FEMA grants urged (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/10)

Three Senate Democrats, including Majority Leader Harry Reid, are trying to persuade President Bush to waive a 10 percent state/local matching requirement on FEMA grants for hurricane-related recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast. The letter says that waiving the requirement would speed the recovery and be consistent with past actions during disasters. Matching payments were forgiven for New York City after the 2001 terrorist attacks, for Florida after Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and for California after the 1989 earthquake.

New Orleans Losing Population (ABC, 2/9)

A year and a half after Hurricane Katrina, an alarming number of residents are leaving New Orleans or seriously thinking of getting out for good. They have become fed up with the violence, the bureaucracy, the political finger-pointing, the sluggish rebuilding and the doubts about the safety of the levees. A November survey found that 32 percent of city residents polled may leave within two years. Political scientist Susan Howell, who did the survey, said more will give up if the recovery does not pick up speed. In fact, figures from the nation's top three moving companies suggest more people left the area than moved into it last year.