

Disaster News Update – February 17 to 23, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Texas
- **Fire:** Arkansas, Maryland, Florida

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Oregon](#): Severe Winter Storm and Flooding (2/22)
- [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)
- Fire Declarations: None in the last 30 days

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Habitat for Humanity Work Moving Slower than Expected (NY Times, 2/22)

Just days after the storm, Habitat's chief executive promising to build and repair as many homes as it could pay for, "hopefully in the thousands." The organization quickly mustered 50,000 volunteers, raised \$127 million, and attracted prominent backers including President Bush, Harry Connick Jr., and Branford Marsalis. But almost 18 months after storms destroyed more than 250,000 homes, Habitat for Humanity says it has built just 36 houses for poor hurricane victims in New Orleans, and a total of 416 along the entire coast, from Alabama to Texas.

Volunteers assist stricken PA businesses (Gateway Newspapers, 2/21)

Adventist Community Services will bring a student-group to Carnegie for a day of service and song. Students from Blue Mountain Academy, located in Hamburg, Pa., will lend their volunteer efforts to help spruce up businesses on Friday, Feb. 23. "The kids wanted to make a whole day of it and volunteer. They will be doing some painting of the businesses in need of rehabilitation. One of the major needs is to try to revitalize the business district."

Katrina 'voluntourists' make labor a vacation (Indianapolis Star, 2/19)

Scott Shattuck, a pharmacy manager from Vancouver, Wash., is in Mississippi on vacation. But by day, he's more likely to be found "mucking out" a house damaged by Hurricane Katrina or painting a children's clinic than hitting the casinos or walking the beach. Shattuck and his group, who also helped out in the New Orleans area, are among the massive wave of volunteers -- half a million, by one estimate -- who have come here from across the nation in the nearly 18 months since Katrina struck.

Lutheran Disaster Response to Expend \$8.3M for Hurricanes (ELCA News, 2/19)

In 2007 Lutheran Disaster Response is expending \$8.3 million in response to the 2005 hurricane season. Since that season Lutherans have raised more than \$26 million to organize and fund recovery work. Lutheran Disaster Response is overseeing the expenditure of the contributions. In consultation with Lutheran social ministry organizations, annual operating budgets are prepared each calendar year, according to Heather L. Feltman, executive director, Lutheran Disaster Response, and director, ELCA Domestic Disaster Response. Lutheran Disaster Response's core components include hardship grants -- supplemental cash grants to displaced people, spiritual and emotional care, volunteer coordination, and long-term recovery (rebuilding) and case management. Hardship grants are provided in the first 60 to 90 days after a disaster.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

[“Pandemic Island” Teaches Preparedness](#) (Bucyrus Telegraph Forum, 02/23)

Susan Wise wants area residents informed and prepared. The registered respiratory therapist at Bucyrus Community Hospital handed out pamphlets to those visiting Pandemic Island, aka the Crawford County Fairgrounds Youth Building. “We’re trying to get the county prepared for a disaster, in case we were hit with an emergency situation.”

[Senior center to host training](#) (The Baxton (AR) Bulletin, 2/21)

The Van Matre Senior Activity Center is hosting a disaster training program called "Arkansas Seniors Are Prepared." The presentation is free to the public. The program will present preparedness and life-saving information to help seniors, their families and communities prepare for emergencies.

[Disaster preparedness packets distributed in Washington](#) (Seattle Times, 2/17)

Bothell (WA) will undertake an ambitious effort in March to try to help its residents prepare for disasters. On weekends throughout the month, 15,000 emergency-preparedness information packets will be delivered to households in the city and in Snohomish County Fire Protection District 10. Each packet will contain a multilingual sheet explaining what the packet contains, a flier with contacts for various services, a letter from the city manager, a disaster-preparedness guide produced by the military department, a vendor list to help residents obtain emergency supplies and a volunteer list recognizing community members assisting with the effort. About 200 volunteers assembled the packets.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

[IL Disaster Officials Discuss November Storm Cleanup](#) (WQAD, 2/22)

State and federal emergency-management officials are helping local governments and private nonprofit organizations get reimbursement for cleanup from last year's ice storm. Public officials from Monroe, St. Clair, Bond, Fayette and Madison counties are invited to meetings today in Belleville and Godfrey. The meetings are the latest that state and

federal officials are holding to brief 18 counties on getting federal disaster assistance related to the ice storm that hit November 30th and December First. Eligible cities and nonprofit entities including electric co-ops can get up to 75 percent of their cleanup costs back. Costs for emergency work and the repair or replacement of public facilities damaged by the storm also will be eligible for reimbursement.

Tornado victims vow to 'come back fighting' (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/18)

Like dozens of beleaguered victims of Tuesday's tornado in Westwego, Harvey and Trisha Diaz had their own tale of watching their savings and hard work ruined by a natural disaster -- for the second time in a year and a half. While some of the homeowners and motel guests spoke of feeling chased by back-to-back tragedies and questioned their decision to remain in the New Orleans area, the Diazes reacted to their demolished beauty salon on the West Bank Expressway by shrugging their shoulders and setting to work saving what they could. They chalked up the upbeat spirit to their experience recovering after Hurricane Katrina flooded their St. Bernard Parish home

FL Response Moves to Long Term Recovery (Disaster News Network, 2/17)

Fritz Wilson of the Florida Baptist Convention said his volunteers have done more than 260 chainsaw clean-up jobs for families around the hard hit Lady Lake and Lake Mack areas in Lake County. They continue to assist with debris removal, but Wilson added they are looking toward the long-term recovery as well. As agencies wrap up the immediate response phase, the focus moves toward setting up a long-term response in the affected counties of Lake, Sumter, Volusia and Seminole. Lake and Sumter County Emergency Response (LASER) is working on getting caseworkers to help the affected families for the long-term.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

NY County tries to prepare for potential flu pandemic (Buffalo News, 2/22)

A thousand body bags. Computer chips to plant on corpses to better track the dead. More saws for autopsies. The Erie County Health Department wants to prepare for a swift-moving flu pandemic in which hundreds of people die. Health officials say they need \$300,000 for basic items. The amount includes nearly \$100,000 for laboratory supplies to identify the influenza strain, \$23,000 for protective gowns and eyewear for workers, and \$73,000 for 800,000 masks to be given to residents -- still too few for the county's 930,000 people.

Emergency Responders Say They Are Better Prepared (Houston Chronicle, 2/21)

Military leaders huddled with civilian responders to make sure they are prepared for the 2007 hurricane season and said they are in better shape now than ever before to respond to requests for help. The U.S. Northern Command, National Guard officers from hurricane-prone states, FEMA officials and others met at Northern Command headquarters, discussing their capabilities and trying to identify any gaps in planning or preparedness.

DC Region Prepares for Pets in Disaster (Washington Post, 2/21)

Spurred by tales of owners forced to abandon their pets during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, jurisdictions around the DC region in recent months have begun wide-scale contingency planning that includes not only people but their furry pals. Fairfax County just shelled out \$35,000 for an incident response center -- complete with air conditioning and its own generator -- for its animal control staff.

Bird flu pandemic would disrupt food supply in the U.S. (Newark Star Ledger, 02/19)

Stocking up on food is as simple as a trip to the grocery store, a veritable land of plenty for Americans. But will fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, bread, milk and other household staples still be available if the U.S. is hit with an anticipated bird flu pandemic? If state and federal officials urge people to stay away from public places, like restaurants and fast-food establishments, will they be able to get the groceries they need to prepare food in their homes? Unlike other critical infrastructure sectors like water, energy and health care, the food industry isn't getting much help from state and federal governments when it comes to disaster planning. That puts the burden on individual supermarket chains and wholesalers to deal with a potentially large number of sick workers that could affect store operations and disrupt the food supply. If a pandemic emerges, DHS projects worker absenteeism to reach 40 percent or more over a prolonged period.

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GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Baton Rouge Struggles With It's Identity (USA Today, 2/22)

Perhaps no other city was affected more by the hundreds of thousands of people who fled New Orleans after Katrina hit Aug. 29, 2005. Within days, Baton Rouge, a city of 225,000, was an overwhelmed mass of about 500,000. Many evacuees were just passing through, but city officials say that today, Baton Rouge's population remains 275,000-325,000. From the Los Angeles-style gridlock on Interstate 10 to the overcrowded schools and the escalating real estate prices that have fueled a housing crunch, Baton Rouge has the look and feel of a place grappling for control of its direction. And although the influx of new residents hasn't dramatically increased crime rates, many residents sense that Baton Rouge has lost some of the small-city civility it enjoyed during what they call "Pre-K" — before Katrina.

N.O. City Planning Commission Seeks Public Input (N.O. Times Picayune, 2/22)

The New Orleans City Planning Commission is holding two public hearings on the citywide recovery plan developed through the Unified New Orleans Plan planning process. The commission is expected to vote on the plan in March and send it, likely with some changes, to the City Council. The team of planners that oversaw preparation of the recovery plan answered questions last week from commission members and their staff. Public comment was not accepted at that time. The citywide plan, developed after several rounds of district and citywide meetings with residents, does not call for eliminating any neighborhoods from redevelopment, no matter how badly they were damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

Levee Plan Leaves Some Helpless (USA Today, 2/21)

State and federal plans for a massive hurricane protection bulwark for Louisiana would sacrifice dozens of coastal communities, some with thousands of residents, to the next Katrina-sized hurricane. The reason: Protecting them would cost too much. If state and federal recommendations are adopted, places such as Venice, a riverbank town of about 2,000 people south of New Orleans, will be left with hurricane protections comparable to the levees they had before Hurricane Katrina swamped them.

Dartmouth, Others Study Katrina Impact in MS (Boston.Com, 2/19)

Researchers from several institutions are beginning a study involving 800 adults who lived in southern Mississippi when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. The goal of the study, which is being funded by the National Institutes of Health, is to help determine the hurricane's impact on individuals and on communities. "This study will help give us an idea about the need for services among people affected by the hurricane," Sandro Galea, a Michigan researcher, said in a statement released Monday.

Indecision Clogging Road Home Program (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/19)

Seventeen months after Hurricane Katrina, fewer than 500 of 100,000 applicants for the Road Home rebuilding program have seen a nickel's worth of their grant. But some of the delay is the result of indecision on the part of homeowners, not bureaucratic bottlenecks. For example, 16,000 applicants have been issued award letters that they are not challenging, and about 3,000 of them are sitting on the fence, uncertain whether to rebuild their storm-ravaged wreck of a home or take a buyout.

College repairs likely to take years (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/19)

Levee breaches let in floodwater that drowned Delgado's City Park campus, as well as Dillard University, Southern University at New Orleans and part of the University of New Orleans. Floodwaters 6 feet high swirled around Delgado's nursing school and the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. All but Dillard are state universities, meaning their recovery comes under the jurisdiction of the state Office of Facility Planning and Control, which is responsible for about 2,100 buildings. "Education is very high on our priority list, but (restoration) is going to take some time," said Jerry Jones, the office's director. The pace of repairs has differed from campus to campus. Although SUNO students are still in trailers because work on their Pontchartrain Park campus

didn't start until the day after Christmas, Delgado's City Park campus and UNO are lively once again, and students are strolling beneath Dillard's stately oaks.

Many Returned NO Residents are Leaving for Good (New York Times, 2/15)

Hundreds of New Orleans' best and brightest have made the wrenching decision to leave at a time when the population is supposed to be rebounding. Their reasons include high crime, high rents, soaring insurance premiums and what many call a lack of leadership, competence, money and progress. But more damning is what many of them describe as a dissipating sense of possibility, a dwindling chance at redemption for a great city that, even before the storm, cried out for great improvement.

Report on Katrina Impact to Persons With Disabilities Released (RTCIL, January 07)

“Assessing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Persons with Disabilities,” funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and released in January 2007, represents the most recent in-depth effort to understand how persons with disabilities prepared for, reacted to, and recovered from the devastating impact of the storm in portions of the Gulf Coast most affected.

View the Report: http://www.rtcil.org/products/NIDRR_FinalKatrinaReport.pdf