

Disaster News Update – February 24 to March 2, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Minnesota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Texas, Nebraska
- **Fire:** New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Georgia, Indiana
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Maryland, New York, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Ohio, Illinois, Virginia, New Jersey, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota,
- **Tornado:** Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Missouri, Georgia

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Louisiana](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (2/23)
- [Pennsylvania](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (2/23)
- [New York](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration) (2/23)
- [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

NGO's goal is to restore trees (New Orleans Times Picayune, 3/2)

Trees have been falling like dominos due to our recent onslaught of natural disasters. The local nonprofit organization Parkway Partners has launched an initiative called ReLeaf New Orleans in an effort to pick up the pieces. Jean Fahr, executive director of Parkway Partners, said hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the subsequent drought have claimed the lives of about 250,000 local trees. One of Parkway Partners' missions is to work with the City of New Orleans and neighborhood groups to re-establish green space and canopies throughout neighborhoods and along city corridors.

Network of nonprofits vital to disaster response (The Argus, 3/1)

Whether the disaster is manmade or natural, being prepared makes all the difference. In the Bay Area, the lessons are all the more relevant. One of the lessons is the crucial role of nonprofit organizations as the major sources of shelter, food and other necessities during disasters. A new collective has formed to improve the preparation, cooperation and coordination of such organizations. A coordinated approach is not only smart, it's a must. The need for better coordination was identified in a survey conducted by the United Way. The organization interviewed 50 disaster response organizations in the Bay Area, reporting its findings in "Ready or Not: Ensuring Bay Area Nonprofits Can Serve During Disaster." The report found most nonprofits were aware of a need to become

better prepared and many had disaster plans in place. However, the plans were not extensive enough and workers needed to be more familiar with them.

College-Age Lutherans Head to Gulf for Spring Break (Elca News Service, 2/26)

More than 800 college and university students from across the country are traveling to the U.S. Gulf Coast during spring break to rebuild homes damaged during the 2005 hurricane season. Through "What a Relief!" -- an opportunity for students and others in campus communities to get involved in disaster relief work -- some students said that volunteer work was a "life-changing" experience. Ryan J. Martin, a student at Lenoir-Rhyne College, Hickory, N.C., said engaging in disaster response work in St. Bernard Parish, near New Orleans, was important work. On Aug. 29, 2005, the eye of Hurricane Katrina passed over the eastern portion of St. Bernard Parish. The hurricane produced a 25-foot storm surge, destroying the levees there. Almost the entire parish was flooded, with most areas sustaining 5 to 12 feet of standing water.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Church to hold disaster training (Lansdale (PA) Reporter, 3/1)

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lansdale is sponsoring a disaster response training program on March 8 and 10. Forty people, mostly members of Trinity, will take part, said Mark Staples, who belongs to the church and serves on a Lutheran Disaster Response Task Force for Southeastern Pennsylvania. He added that two representatives from the Philadelphia chapter of the American Red Cross will be involved in the training. Staples said the first night will be devoted to educating attendees about general disaster response.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Iowa Governor Declares Whole State Disaster Area (KARE11, 3/2)

Heavy, wet snow and blizzard conditions hit the Plains and Midwest on Thursday, shutting down hundreds of miles of interstate highways. Schools closed in several states, and hundreds of flights were canceled. Two people were killed when their car overturned on a slick road in North Dakota, and snowplows were pulled off the roads in the western Minnesota because of strong wind and heavy snow. The storm moved into Iowa with rain and sleet but changed to snow around dawn. The western part of the state was hit with a blizzard that dropped visibility to a quarter-mile or less for at least three hours. By midday, as much as a foot of snow covered the town of Atlantic. A blizzard also hit eastern Nebraska, with a foot of snow in the Omaha area and up to 15 inches of snow expected in some areas before it dies off Friday.

19 Die in Storms in Alabama and Missouri (New York Times, 3/2)

A storm system that stretched nearly 1,000 miles from the Midwest to the Southeast on Thursday killed at least eight people in two states, including five who died when an apparent tornado caused the roof to collapse at a high school in Enterprise, Ala., state

emergency management officials said. Some students remained unaccounted for late Thursday and could be trapped inside the building, said Larry Walker, deputy director of the Emergency Management Agency in Coffee County, in southeastern Alabama.

Help Available in 3 AR Counties (AR Democrat Gazette, 2/28)

Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services offices are accepting applications for individual and family-grant programs in the three counties declared state disaster areas in the aftermath of Saturday's severe weather, including Desha County, Drew County, and Union County. Residents seeking temporary housing assistance are instructed to call the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management.

Cattle owners plead for aid (Denver Post, 2/26)

Hundreds of southeastern Colorado ranchers - many arriving with muddy boots and tired faces - packed a small community center Sunday to plead with state and federal officials to provide some kind of direct assistance to offset a winter of punishing weather and catastrophic losses. "This is pretty close to home," said rancher Curtis Foos, who estimated he has lost more than 250 calves and cattle. Ranchers and farmers in 10 counties on the Eastern Plains have yet to receive any state or federal financial assistance to help them recover from a brutal winter that began with a December storm that left drifts up to 15 feet high, stranding cattle. Counties got money for snow removal, but farmers are not yet being compensated for losses.

Disaster areas declared in tornado-hit parishes (N.O. Times Picayune, 2/24)

President Bush has declared Orleans, Jefferson and St. Martin parishes major disaster areas as a result of the severe storms and tornadoes that struck the areas Feb. 12-13. The declaration Friday, requested by Gov. Kathleen Blanco, makes residents and businesses in the affected area eligible for federal aid, including grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property and other federal assistance. People can start applying for assistance today by calling 1-(800) 621-3362 or registering online at www.fema.gov. FEMA Director David Paulison said he has appointed Lee Champagne as the coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected parishes. According to Blanco's office, the storms and tornadoes damaged 295 homes in Orleans Parish, 32 of which were destroyed and 20 others that suffered major damage. Jefferson Parish reported damage to 231 homes, of which 23 were destroyed and 37 suffered major damage. In St. Martin Parish, 80 homes were damaged.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Mississippi takes on insurance fight familiar to Florida (Insurance News Net, 2/27)

Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood promised last week to block State Farm from refusing to write new homeowners and commercial insurance policies in the state. Besides referring to State Farm's "robber baron mentality" and launching a criminal investigation, Hood wants to require any company that writes automobile insurance in Mississippi and also writes property policies in other states to offer property insurance

throughout Mississippi. Sound familiar? That's what the Florida Legislature did last month.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Free health clinic opening to help Lower 9 come back (N.O. Times Picayune, 3/2)
Eighteen months after the levee failures and Hurricane Katrina shattered the Lower 9th Ward, residents this week welcomed the opening of a free health clinic on St. Claude Avenue. The Lower 9th Ward Health Clinic is a bright spot, with baby blue walls, gleaming floors and stuffed animals dotting the waiting room. And it's fully stocked with nurses, a medical director, five examination rooms and the typical supplies, all paid for by private donors and volunteer groups. But for those rebuilding this struggling corner of New Orleans, devastated by the flooding of Aug. 29, 2005, the health clinic at 5228 St. Claude Ave. is a beacon drawing people home.

Democrats propose N.O. teacher incentives (New Orleans Times Picayune, 3/1)
As President Bush heads to New Orleans today to tour a school and talk about education, House Democrats are preparing to unveil legislation that would pour \$250 million into the city's hurricane-ravaged school system over the next five years. The plan would grant financial incentives to teachers and principals to stay in or move to New Orleans. It also would pay \$500-per-month housing subsidies and authorize as much as \$500 million in grants to universities and colleges closed by flooding after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Volunteer spirit touted on road to recovery (N.O. Times Picayune, 3/1)
Conceding that the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort has fallen far short of what it needs to accomplish, former Secretary of State Colin Powell said Wednesday at Tulane University that every American has an obligation to join the effort to help the New Orleans area rebuild. "I think the American people are deeply troubled by the problems of New Orleans," he said to a standing-room-only crowd of about 500 people. "I don't think we have done a good enough job of funneling all the resources" to the places and people needing them.

New Orleans colleges have 'long way to go' (USA Today, 3/1)
A mystery odor still emanates on occasion from parts unknown. And chapel renovations aren't quite finished. But athletics have returned, and so has some nightlife. And expansion plans that had to be delayed are moving forward. Xavier University, mired in up to 5 feet of water after Hurricane Katrina, looks more like a campus than a disaster area these days, and that is nothing short of a "miracle," says president Norman Francis. Others say there's more to it than that.

Landrieu Seeks to Forgo Duplication Rule (Advocate, 2/28)
U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., introduced legislation that would allow the federal government to exempt hurricane victims from repaying federal loans with any rebuilding grants they may receive. The Catastrophic Disaster Recovery Improvement Act would allow the SBA to waive a provision that forbids a duplication of benefits for catastrophic

disasters. Currently, Louisiana hurricane victims who receive Road Home rebuilding grants from the state must first repay any SBA loans they had received. "Hurricane victims will be unable to rebuild if they are forced to use their federal grants to pay off their federal loans," Landrieu said in a statement.

Appropriators ask HUD to fix Gulf Coast funding glitch (GovExec.Com, 2/28)

Key lawmakers are urging the Housing and Urban Development Department to shield Gulf Coast housing authorities from the loss of nearly \$140 million in rental assistance funds for low-income individuals and families that might result from a policy change in the recently enacted fiscal 2007 continuing resolution. But HUD and House GOP appropriators argue that the agency has no authority to do so without a congressional fix, and low-income housing advocates are lobbying to alleviate the problem in the upcoming Iraq war supplemental.

Slidell budgets for city's recovery (New Orleans Times Picayune, 2/28)

The Slidell City Council agreed Tuesday to allocate \$20.3 million for expenses related primarily to Hurricane Katrina, with most of the money coming from FEMA. The money will be used for cleaning sewers and roadside drains, repairing the Schneider Canal pumping station and removing storm debris, among other storm-related projects. Insurance proceeds, balances in the city's general, sales tax and utility funds, and leases at Slidell Municipal Airport will supplement the FEMA money. About \$7.9 million of the allocation will be used to plug a hole in last year's annual budget caused by Katrina-related costs. Mayor Ben Morris introduced the second supplemental budget of the 2006-07 fiscal year, which included the \$20.3 million change, to the City Council in January.

Playground repairs are on the way in Jefferson (N.O. Times Picayune, 2/27)

For 18 months the gyms of several Jefferson Parish playgrounds have sagged in silence, their walls buckled by water, their roofs peeled back by winds from Hurricane Katrina. For 18 months parish administrators have waded through debris and lobbied for money from Washington, D.C., to restore the meeting rooms, concession stands and moribund basketball courts inside the structures. Now the parish stands poised to dip into the \$6.15 million set aside by FEMA solely to rehabilitate Jefferson Parish playgrounds. The federal disaster agency has agreed to pay 90 percent of the repairs to all but the Pontiff Playground, FEMA spokesperson Rachel Rodi said. The total cost is estimated to be more than \$9.4 million and the parish is responsible for the remaining 10 percent of the cost of each project.

Red tape tangles Katrina evacuee's fight home (San Antonio Express News, 2/24)

Frustration with government was a theme of this year's Mardi Gras festival, which ended Tuesday in New Orleans. According to news accounts, people made costumes by wrapping themselves in red tape. Others carried giant, fake checks to show that the promised government help wasn't coming. But at least those people made it home. Before Katrina struck, David Hensley lived in an apartment in the Lower Ninth Ward. Now he resides in the SAMMinistries shelter on Commerce Street, where he has lived for more than a year.