

## **Disaster News Update – January 20 to 26, 2007**

### **RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)**

- **Drought:** Texas, Wyoming, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota
- **Fire:** California, Texas, Florida, Maryland
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Colorado, Arizona, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland

### **CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)**

- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (1/15)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Winter Storms and Flooding (Emergency Declaration (1/15))
- [Nebraska](#): Severe Winter Storm (1/7)
- [Kansas](#): Severe Winter Storm (1/7)
- [Colorado](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration (1/7))
- [Colorado](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration (1/7))
- [Missouri](#): Severe Winter Storms (12/29)
- [Oregon](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (12/29)
- [Illinois](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration (12/29))
- Fire Declarations: None in the last 30 days

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Pet Disaster Report; Animal Response Volunteers** (Hazards Observer, 1/26)

Using Hurricane Katrina as a case study, this research report examines how emergency responders provide for pets after a disaster. The author used participant observation to note the emotional needs of volunteers who help rescue, feed, shelter, and care for animals in a disaster. The author also notes that animals, because they are central to many families, cannot be left behind, and emergency response plans must account for pets.

#### **AL Volunteers Join Response to Winter Storms** (AL.Com, 1/25)

Alabama Baptists are joining other Southern Baptist disaster relief teams in responding to the ice storm that slammed into California Jan. 12 and traveled across the United States through Jan. 16, leaving an icy trail from Texas to Maine. An assessment team from Elmore Baptist Association traveled to Missouri Jan. 19, and another from St. Clair Baptist Association was scheduled to arrive Jan. 21. Chain saw teams in the state had been placed on alert and would probably be sent out sometime after the 21st.

### **COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Parishes now share a radio system** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/24)

Incorporating lessons learned in the chaotic aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina, law enforcement agencies in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes can now communicate with each other using one radio system. On

Monday, the agencies brought online a shared 700-megahertz digital radio system paid for with federal disaster funds and grant money from DHS.

**Baltimore City, Hospitals Team Up on Disaster Response** (Baltimore Business, 1/24)  
Baltimore City hospitals have reached an agreement with the city to pool their resources in the event of a bioterrorist attack. As part of the agreement, the city's hospitals will share staff and supplies in the event of a disaster or public health catastrophe. The deal also calls for the coordination of mutual aid requests through the city's emergency operations center.

## **RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

**SBA offices, chambers investigate MO storm damage** (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 1/25)  
Missouri's regional SBA office has teamed up with local chambers of commerce around the state to help determine the level of damage and economic loss sustained by small businesses from an ice storm this month. Once all the information is documented, Missouri's State Emergency Management Agency will submit it to Gov. Matt Blunt, who will send an official proposal for disaster assistance to SBA's national headquarters in Washington.

**SBA Approves CA Emergency Loans** (Central Valley Business Times, 1/25)  
The SBA approved California's request to provide assistance from the federal Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program to 40 California counties (20 declared county disaster areas and 20 contiguous counties) impacted by severe cold weather earlier this month.

**FEMA Approves \$5.4 Million for NY June Floods** (Record Online, 1/25)  
FEMA approved \$5.4 million to reimburse eligible local governments and certain nonprofit agencies in Sullivan County for disaster-related costs from June flooding. The grants are from the FEMA/State of New York Public Assistance Program, which reimburses local governments and nonprofits for costs including debris removal, emergency barricades and restoration of damaged public infrastructure. Altogether, FEMA has approved a total of more than \$104 million in public assistance grants statewide for damage from the June flooding.

**FEMA Expands Kansas Disaster Coverage** (Cattle Network, 1/25)  
FEMA has expanded federal aid for 42 western Kansas counties. The move will provide public assistance in all remaining categories beyond the initial announcement covering only debris removal and emergency protection. FEMA will reimburse costs up to 75% for losses incurred by local and state government as a result of the winter storm. Assistance now will cover road and bridge damage, water control facilities, public buildings, public utilities, parks, debris removal and emergency protection measures. Snow removal also will be covered in 11 northwest Kansas counties. Without this aid, many small communities in the affected area could have faced budget deficits and potential tax increases.

**CA Citrus growers tally loss from freeze** (SF Chronicle, 1/24)

California citrus growers lost more than \$800 million as a result of prolonged freezing temperatures this month. The freeze stands as the most damaging blow to the industry in nearly a decade. Other crops suffered too, including avocados, strawberries, spring vegetables and artichokes. Total losses from the freeze were more than \$1 billion, state officials have estimated. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has asked the SBA to declare 21 California counties disaster areas, making residents eligible for emergency loans.

**FEMA Assistance Limited to Loans in Snohomish (WA)** (Seattle Times, 1/24)

Beginning Thursday, the Disaster Recovery Center at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe will switch to taking only low-interest loan applications. The change occurs as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wraps up its assistance program for people who suffered losses during the November floods. The FEMA recovery center previously open in Granite Falls also is taking only low-interest SBA loan applications.

**Disaster relief on the way for St. Charles (MO)** (St. Louis Post Dispatch, 1/24)

As huge piles of broken tree limbs grow even larger at drop-off sites, local officials will meet today with federal disaster relief officials to discuss cleanup plans for this month's ice storm. Dozens of officials from St. Charles County and perhaps elsewhere are scheduled to meet at St. Peters City Hall with FEMA representatives. The main topic will be a discussion of federal money available to reimburse local governments for their costs of responding to the storm.

**Oklahoma State/Federal Response Continues** (All American Patriots, 1/23)

The OK State EOC remains activated due to winter weather conditions that continue to impact areas of the state. The OK Department of Emergency Management has received the following reports:

- Since Jan. 12, there have been 32 deaths attributed to the storm
- 3,919 people have been treated at Oklahoma hospitals for various injuries related to winter storm conditions

**NY Farmers Eligible for Disaster Loans** (Evening Telegram, 1/22)

Few local farmers were devastated by last year's flooding and heavy rains, but crops did suffer some damage nonetheless and many farmers are in need of extra assistance, remarked Bill Gibson, executive director of the Herkimer County Farm Service Agency. For them, more help is on the way. Herkimer County has been declared eligible for Farm Service Agency disaster emergency loan assistance due to damages and losses caused by excessive rain, flooding and flash flooding since April 1 last year and continuing.

**Storms Continue, Thousands Without Power** (Disaster News Network, 1/22)

Parts of the U.S. are again digging out from heavy snow and ice after yet another winter storm, while more than 80,000 people are still without power from last week's storm. Snow and ice fell across many southwestern and central states, stretching from Arizona to Missouri. Parts of Interstate 70 were closed in Colorado due to icy conditions, as were roads in many other states. At least 11 deaths were caused by this latest storm, most due

to traffic accidents. Some areas in Arizona and New Mexico received between five and ten inches of snow, with some rare snow falling in southern Arizona into late Sunday and Monday.

**FEMA to help cover tab from CO holiday storms** (Rocky Mountain News, 1/20)  
FEMA will begin reimbursing counties and local governments for extra expenses during the state's two holiday blizzards. FEMA workers will fan out throughout the affected Colorado counties to take applications for public assistance grants. Emily Valora, public assistance officer for FEMA, said State and local officials and some nonprofit agencies can apply for funds to cover expenses such as snow removal, sanding, equipment rental, employee overtime and shelters for stranded people. Gov. Bill Ritter has applied to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for assistance to ranchers who lost more than 10,000 head of cattle in storms that created drifts up to 10 feet high on Colorado's eastern plains.

## **PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

**FL Center Offers Free Disaster Training** (Sun Sentinel, 1/25)  
The Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness at Nova Southeastern University educates and trains health care professionals so that Floridians will respond in an organized manner in the event of a major disaster such as a terrorist attack or major hurricane, said Cecilia Rokusek, project manager for the center. The center offers free training courses, in person and via the Internet, for any health care community members such as emergency room staff, first responders, nurses, pharmacists and physicians.

**Ice Storm Revealed Oklahomans Not Prepared** (KOTV, 1/25)  
23 of Oklahoma's 77 counties are recovering from an ice storm that has so far cost, nearly \$40-million. About a-quarter of that money went toward emergency management. As the ice storm began to make its mark, Oklahomans braved freezing rain to stock-up on the essentials. It did get bad, heavy ice knocked out power to about 125,000 people. Many went without light, heat, or water. Public shelters in rural communities filled-up with people, waiting for crews to repair their utilities. Emergency managers the News on 6 spoke with in the counties we visited said they were shocked at how many people were not prepared for a disaster.

**Major Flood Risk in KY, TN** (Disaster News Network, 1/22)  
Thousands of people along the Cumberland River in Kentucky and Tennessee are potentially facing severe and sudden floods as local officials announced a nearby dam was at high risk of failing. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Monday lowered the water level in Lake Cumberland behind the Wolf Creek Dam in Russell County, Ky. The Corps said in a news release that the dam is classified as "high risk" for structural failure. The water will be lowered to 680 feet immediately. Investigators said water has been seeping underneath the dam for some time now and "these changes are in concert with ongoing rehabilitation plans at Wolf Creek that address the problem of seepage through the foundation of the dam."

**Connecticut Focuses on Planning Process for Emergencies** (Govt. Technology, 1/22)  
Gov. M. Jodi Rell announced that notices have been sent out this week to all Connecticut mayors and first selectmen concerning a spring training session that will focus on Connecticut's statewide evacuation and mass sheltering planning process.

**Symposium Offered On Mitigation Program in D'Iberville (MS)** (FEMA, 1/22)  
The City of D'Iberville hosted a Community Outreach Symposium on Jan. 24. The symposium offered an open community forum for local citizens, design professionals, engineers, builders and others interested in information on the principles and practices required for new construction and reconstruction of homes and businesses in the City of D'Iberville.

## **GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

**New Orleans Struggles to Find Teachers** (Associated Press, 1/25)  
Some of New Orleans' most desperate, run-down schools are beset with a severe shortage of teachers, and they are struggling to attract candidates by appealing to their sense of adventure and desire to make a difference. Education officials are even offering to help new teachers find housing.

**Big Easy makes way for new recovery czar** (Christian Science Monitor, 1/25)  
Ed Blakely, the planning guru hired to steer New Orleans out of its muddle, is like the Forrest Gump of disaster recovery. California earthquake? There he is, amid wrecked interstates. Tsunami? That's him touring rebuilt villages. Terror attacks in Manhattan? When the dust settles, the distinguished-looking African-American man is at the center of a phalanx of planners. His arrival in New Orleans two weeks ago as the city's new recovery czar may be the biggest challenge for the "master of post-disaster," as his hometown paper, the Los Angeles Times, calls him.

**Students Turned Away by New Orleans Schools** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/24)  
In an exceedingly rare move for a public school system, hundreds of children seeking spots in the city's schools have been "wait-listed" and told that the campuses have no room. In the state-run Recovery School District, where 300 students have been placed on a waiting list since Jan. 8, officials are scrambling to open additional buildings and hire more teachers. Meanwhile, an unknown number of students have been turned away from the various other types of public schools in the emerging system, including 31 independent charter schools and five still run by the Orleans Parish School Board.

**New program aids small businesses** (NO Times Picayune, 1/24)  
The overwhelming clamor from an overflow audience of small-business owners in New Orleans proved both hopeful and foreboding for the future of a new \$138 million grant and loan program. Announcing the aid at the Ashe Cultural Arts Center in Central City, Gov. Kathleen Blanco and other state and local leaders rejoiced that they could finally deliver relief to small businesses ravaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. But they also

acknowledged that they don't have nearly enough money to go around.

**New Orleans seeking money for loan program** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/23)  
Admitting he lacks firm commitments, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin said he hopes that several New York philanthropies will float as much as \$15 million to help City Hall expand a proposed program to provide loans to residents awaiting Road Home rebuilding grants. Though few details of the One New Orleans Road Home Fast Track Program have emerged since Nagin announced it Nov. 1, top aides at City Hall said the program will be rolled out by Wednesday. The program will offer no-interest or low-interest loans of as much as \$50,000 apiece to homeowners who will replenish the revolving loan pool when their Road Home checks arrive, aides said.

**State Farm to Pay Mississippi Homeowners** (USA Today, 1/23)  
State Farm has agreed to pay thousands of Mississippi homeowners hit by Hurricane Katrina likely hundreds of millions of dollars in a landmark settlement that's expected to reverberate across the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast. The company agreed to a deal under which it will reopen thousands of homeowners' claims and is likely to pay as much as \$500 million. In a related development, State Farm will settle more than 600 individual Mississippi homeowners' Katrina claims for roughly \$80 million.

**Katrina Evacuees Want More Than Extension** (Houston Chronicle, 1/23)  
A six-month extension of emergency housing assistance will stave off an immediate catastrophe but will not solve the underlying problems preventing hurricane victims from rebuilding their lives, evacuees and their advocates said. FEMA confirmed that assistance would continue through Aug. 31 for about 128,000 households living in trailers, mobile homes or apartments, including about 14,000 in the Houston area.

**New Orleans Likely to be Half Original Population** (New York Times, 1/21)  
The empty streets, deserted avenues and abandoned houses prompt a gnawing question, nearly 17 months after Hurricane Katrina: Is this what New Orleans has come to — a city half its old size? Over and over, the city's leaders reassure citizens that better days and, above all, more people are in the future. Their destiny will not merely be to reside in a smaller city with a few good restaurants and curious local customs, the citizens are told. But some economists and demographers are beginning to wonder whether New Orleans will top out at about half its prestorm population of about 444,000.

**Immigrant Workers Show Range of Health Problems** (The Advocate, 1/20)  
The waves of Hispanic immigrants who poured into New Orleans in the weeks and months after Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters receded to help rebuild the city now are facing a torrent of health- and work-related issues. Those issues include exposure to asbestos, lead and other toxins; lack of health insurance and mental health counseling; cultural and linguistic barriers in the health-care arena; scarce prenatal care for pregnant immigrant women; and housing challenges. Louisiana and other Gulf Coast states were not adequately prepared to serve their pre-Katrina immigrant communities or the influx of immigrant day laborers who arrived after the storm.

