

## **Disaster News Update – January 27 to February 2, 2007**

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

- **Drought:** Texas, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota
- **Extreme Cold:** Oklahoma, California
- **Fire:** n/a
- **Flood:** Alaska
- **Petroleum Tank Explosion:** West Virginia
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee
- **Wind:** Hawaii

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

- [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))
- [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**

#### **As Aid Lags, Volunteers Shoulder Rebuilding on Gulf Coast** (Washington Post, 1/28)

The two-by-fours inside the walls of George and Margaret Ladner's new home are inscribed with biblical verses, each written by one of the Alabama schoolchildren who raised money to buy the lumber. The framing work on the house was done by a Christian from Pennsylvania, the exterior planking was put up by people from Texarkana, Tex., and a group from Destin, Fla., worked on other details. In this small rural community, as in much of the hurricane-ravaged Mississippi Gulf Coast, this kind of motley charity effort accounts for the vast bulk of what halting progress has been made in the immense task of rebuilding.

#### **Severe weather class offered** (Desoto (KS) Explorer, 2/1)

Johnson County (KS) citizens are invited to attend the annual severe weather training program. The program is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Johnson County Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and the National Weather Service, and will include educating citizens about safety considerations in responding to severe weather; defining weather terminology, such as types of weather

alerts and warnings; discussing the role of the National Weather Service in forecasting, tracking, and informing the public about severe weather activities; and explaining the role of Emergency Management in time of severe weather and Johnson County's early warning siren system.

**Brethren Disaster Response Opens 4<sup>th</sup> Katrina Project** (Worldwide Faith News, 2/1)  
Brethren Disaster Response has announced the opening of a fourth active Hurricane Katrina recovery project as of Feb. 11. This project will be based in Chalmette, La., in St. Bernard Parish. Brethren Disaster Response is a ministry of the Church of the Brethren General Board. The program's three other Katrina recovery projects are located in Pearl River, La.; Lucedale, Miss.; and McComb, Miss. Disaster Child Care, another disaster-focused Church of the Brethren ministry, also is working at a FEMA "Welcome Home Center" in New Orleans.

**Baptist Chainsaw Teams Volunteer in Oklahoma** (ABP News.Com, 2/1)  
Jack Macy calls them "angels." And 180 families agree with him. Macy is referring to chainsaw teams deployed by Texas Baptist Men to help victims of severe ice storms in North Texas and Oklahoma. The teams, totaling more than 50 men, converged Jan. 31 on McAlester, Okla., and Pryor, Okla., to help residents dig out from the ice storm that claimed at least 32 lives. The ice storm left 4,500 electric utility poles down and tens of thousands of residents without electricity for more than a week. More than 200 utility crews attempted to restore power. Red Cross volunteers came from as far away as New York to set up shelters, serve meals and aid storm victims.

## COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

**Brevard County (FL) Updates Special Needs List** (Florida Today, 2/1)  
Brevard County's Office of Emergency Management is updating its special needs list. The list is used to identify people with medical disabilities or transportation needs for quick pickup during an emergency evacuation. Frequently, residents living on barrier islands, in low-lying areas and in manufactured homes are evacuated when a hurricane is approaching. However, people could also require evacuation for a fire, tornado or any other man-made or natural disaster.

**IL to give \$100,000 grant to groups for prep. programs** (News Democrat, 2/1)  
IL has announced a \$100,000 grant to help local Citizen Corps Councils prepare their communities for disasters. Funds for the grant come from fees paid for "America Remembers" vehicle license plates, which pay tribute to victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The grants will be used by Citizen Corps Councils to support their training, community preparedness and public information efforts.

## RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

**Two More NE Counties Added to FEMA Declaration** (Media Newswire, 2/2)

FEMA announced the approval of a request by Nebraska to add two additional counties to the disaster area resulting from the ice storms late last year. Deuel County and Butler County were added today to the list of 57 counties already eligible to receive federal disaster assistance. As with the other counties impacted by the recent storms, both Deuel and Butler Counties will now be eligible to apply for funds from the Public Assistance program in Categories A and B.

**Ice Dams Cause Concern in Indiana** (Fox News, 2/2)

Rising water in the St. Joseph River causes fear of flooding for people in the Elkhart area. Just last night the river rose two feet. That has residents in the area afraid because ice chunks are forming and that means the water is rising. If you take a look at the river you can clearly see the ice chunks which have already started causing ice jams in this part of the St. Joseph River. Elkhart County Emergency Management officials are concerned about the possibility of this ice buildup causing the river to overflow onto people's property. To try and prevent that from happening they delivered a truckload of sand and about 200 sandbags to Six Span Bridge.

**FL Tornado Leaves Families in Need** (Disaster News Network, 2/1)

Residents still reeling from a Christmas Day tornado are facing recovery issues after a request for a federal disaster declaration was denied this week. Local agencies are helping in the meantime, but the forward progress will be slow. "These are a lot of low-income folks, and they're holding out on their own for now and maybe living with relatives, but that's getting old," said the Rev. Bill Beebe of DeLeon Springs United Methodist Church.

**MO County Seeks Volunteers to Help with Cleanup** (News-Leader.Com, 2/1)

Webster County Emergency Management is seeking volunteers to assist in debris cleanup on private property in Webster County on Saturday. Volunteers will be primarily serving the senior and disabled population. Those willing to volunteer should meet at 8 a.m. at the Webster County Road and Bridge Department, 1106 S. White Oak, Marshfield. Volunteers should bring chain saws, gas/oil mixes, gloves, personal protective equipment and other supplies that could be needed for debris cleanup. Those assisting in cleanup should be finished by 5 p.m.

**RITA Disaster Loans Top \$988 Million** (Relief Web, 2/1)

Individuals and families in Texas affected by Hurricane Rita have received more than \$988 million in disaster assistance, including grants from FEMA and low-interest disaster loans from the SBA.

**CO County Added to Existing FEMA Declaration** (All American Patriots, 1/31)

FEMA announced that federal snow emergency funds have been made available to help Teller County cover specific costs related to the severe winter storm of Dec. 18-22, 2006. Snow emergency declarations for Colorado counties in the Dec. 18 – 22 winter snow storm now include Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Custer, Denver, Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Gilpin, Jefferson, Las Animas, Pueblo, Teller and Washington. The counties declared for the December 28–31 storm include Baca, Bent, Crowley, Otero, Prowers and Pueblo.

**Churches Help OK Recovery** (Disaster News Network, 1/29)

Disaster response teams from churches are not only helping Oklahomans recover from recent winter storms, they are helping them feel better about human nature and about the church, said Leon Alexander of the Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Response Team.

**PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

**Hurricane-type Classification System Created for Flu** (CNN, 2/1)

The government will predict the severity of the next flu pandemic just as forecasters predict hurricane strength -- using a ranking system to help states determine when they should take increasingly strong steps to combat flu's spread. At issue are old-fashioned infection-control measures that may help slow the spread of the next worldwide outbreak of a super-flu until vaccines become available, steps that range from home quarantine to closing schools and postponing sporting events.

**GAO: Guard may lack gear needed for domestic crises** (GovExec.Com, 1/31)

Congressional investigators have found that the Defense Department does not adequately track National Guard equipment needs for domestic missions, raising questions about whether the state-run units have adequate supplies to respond to disasters and emergencies on U.S. soil. In an unreleased report, the GAO concluded that defense officials have recognized the need to track the National Guard's stateside stocks of vehicles and other gear available to respond to domestic disasters, but those efforts have not yet yielded reliable information on the equipment units have at their disposal.

**Several States Push Earthquake Preparedness** (Disaster News Network, 1/30)

The U.S. Geological Survey says the central U.S. has more earthquakes than any other part of the country east of the Rocky Mountains. With that in mind, emergency planners and responders want the public to be ready. Several states are holding Earthquake Awareness Weeks around the anniversary of the third of three devastating 1811 to 1812 New Madrid Seismic Zone earthquakes - magnitude 8 quakes that struck in December, January and February.

**Business Group Offers Plan to Coord. Disaster Response** (Washington Post, 1/30)

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, many business leaders complained that despite contributions of \$1.2 billion in relief or services, too many efforts to help the U.S. disaster response were thwarted by red tape. Truckloads of goods were turned back on the roads by police or the National Guard. Donations of vital telecommunications gear were delayed, although they could have provided critical phone and computer links in the early hours. Big retailers offered bottled water at low cost but had to sell to the government through approved contractors that charged taxpayers more. Yesterday, Business Executives for National Security, a nonprofit, nonpartisan advisory group representing disaster-related industries, released "Getting Down to Business," a plan for public-private disaster coordination.

**146 US Levees at Risk of Failure** (USA Today, 1/29)

The Army Corps of Engineers has identified 146 levees nationwide that it says pose an unacceptable risk of failing in a major flood. The deficiencies, mostly due to poor maintenance, are forcing communities from Connecticut to California to invest millions of dollars in repairs.

**GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

**New Orleans Plan Sees 10-Year, \$14Bln Rebuilding** (Yahoo News, 1/31)

New Orleans' latest plan to recover from Hurricane Katrina calls for a 10-year rebuilding program costing \$14 billion that will leave some neighborhoods still sparsely populated. The proposal, compiled by planning experts and residents, calls for \$1.2 billion in incentives for elevating homes either by raising the ground level or by putting them on stilts, \$831 million to repair or rebuild schools and \$650 million to rehabilitate low-income housing.

**Many Katrina Victims Still Living on Hold** (USA Today, 1/31)

In the 17 months since the most destructive hurricane to hit land in U.S. history scoured much of the Mississippi Gulf Coast clean, and the failure of the levee system in New Orleans caused torrential flooding, tens of thousands of homeowners have been living life on hold. They haven't been able to rebuild because they've been unable to get the money they thought they were owed from their insurers.

**Guidelines urged for recovery program** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/31)

Emergency response officials need to provide better guidelines for the plans and procedures that states put in place to administer grants in disaster recovery programs, according to a new federal report that focuses on the process in Louisiana and Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina.

**FEMA Approves \$29 Million for MS Katrina Projects** (WLBT, 1/30)

FEMA has approved four Hurricane Katrina-related projects in Mississippi totaling over \$29 million, officials said Monday. The largest public assistance grant -- \$18,399,744 -- goes to the MS Emergency Management Agency to pay for some of the help Mississippi received from Florida in the hurricane's immediate aftermath.

**Program Addresses Katrina Agricultural Recovery** (Disaster News Network, 1/30)

The hurricane recovery in Louisiana is about more than just home rebuilds, and Amanda Hardesty is helping volunteers fill that unique role. From rebuilding crab shedding tanks, to helping fisherman recover valuable nets, Hardesty's Katrina Agricultural and coastal Resources Experience (We KARE) program is providing a helping hand to the agricultural recovery of Louisiana.

**Louisiana Residents Pull Back from Coast** (Associated Press, 1/30)

More than 16 months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita forced an unprecedented exodus from the Louisiana Gulf Coast, tens of thousands of homeowners have decided not to rebuild or have yet to make up their minds, an Associated Press analysis found. The AP looked at applications to the federally funded Louisiana Road Home program, which dispenses up to \$150,000 per homeowner to rebuild or sell out to the state. Nearly 98,000 people have applied so far.

**Senators Blast Storm Relief** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/30)

A panel of three U.S. senators convened a hearing in New Orleans on Monday, vowing to fix a broken federal disaster relief system and largely dismissing the testimony of federal officials, who tried to pin the slow Gulf Coast recovery on their state and local counterparts. Sen. Joe Lieberman, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said that it will take at least a decade of federal commitment to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast from the 2005 hurricanes.

**State Relief for Hospitals is on the Way** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/30)

Jefferson Parish's public hospitals will receive today the first share of the state's \$120 million assistance for treating uninsured patients last year, with nearly 50 other Louisiana hospitals receiving partial payments in two weeks. Gov. Kathleen Blanco's office announced Monday that the state would pay \$8.7 million to West Jefferson Medical Center in Marrero and \$3.6 million to East Jefferson General Hospital, followed by another allotment this spring when administrators determine whether the pool will cover all statewide requests. Health and Hospitals Secretary Fred Cerise said the process for certifying public hospitals' losses on patients who couldn't pay was quicker than verifying the same information submitted by private hospitals. An estimated 46 other hospitals statewide should expect to receive part of their share of the money in two weeks, he said.