

Disaster News Update – January 6 to 12, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Chemical Release/Accident:** Texas, West Virginia
- **Drought:** Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Arkansas
- **Fire:** Texas, California
- **Tornado:** Georgia, Texas

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [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))
- [Washington](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides (12/12)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms, Flooding (12/12)
- [Alaska](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides (12/8)
- Fire Declarations: None in the last 30 days

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Training for Disaster Relief in Rincon, GA, (Savannah Now, 1/11)

The campus of the First Baptist Church of Rincon was bustling with the activities of a statewide disaster training seminar on Jan. 5 and 6. About 225 volunteers for the Georgia Baptist Convention Disaster Relief Ministries donned official yellow hats and assembled in groups around instructors to learn step-by-step procedures required during disaster assistance.

Volunteers teach disaster preparedness on MLK Day (Eureka Reporter, 1/10)

More than 150 AmeriCorps, Red Cross and community volunteers will participate in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service outreach program. Volunteers will meet at College of the Redwoods, then go door to door in six communities to educate residents about earthquake and tsunami preparedness.

Red Cross Revamps Disaster Operations (The Advocate, 1/7)

The 2005 hurricane season tested the American Red Cross' abilities as they have never been tested before, and critics said the charity didn't measure up. But one strength seemed intact for the 126-year-old charity: its ability to raise money. Donors gave the Red Cross about \$2.14 billion in the months after hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck the Gulf Coast.

Road trip to a devastated city (Boston Globe, 1/7)

Beyond the doors to UMass-Boston's Campus Center, the calm of a sun-gilded Dorchester Bay gave way to the commotion of students gathering for a winter-break trip. Digital cameras made an early appearance, documenting the moments preceding a 22-hour ride. Luggage topped with pillows stood before the single chartered bus waiting to transport more than 50 students to a southern locale that tops few winter-getaway lists: Katrina-ravaged New Orleans.

Red Cross team in need of volunteers (Milwaukee Sentinel Journal, 1/7)

An all-volunteer Red Cross team designed to help families pick their lives up from the ashes may be forced to cut some services due to a drop in participation. Aging, relocation and drain from major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Midwest tornadoes have left the volunteer level for Red Cross' Disaster Action Team at a critical low, said Tom Barnum, team chairman.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Evacuees in Houston Get Housing Help (Houston Chronicle, 1/11)

Hurricane evacuees seeking reinstatement of their federal housing assistance can get help today at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Attorneys with Lone Star Legal Aid, a legal service for the poor, will assist evacuees in filling out forms needed to appeal FEMA's decision.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

U.S. lawmakers seek federal aid for New Mexico (Rio Rancho Observer, 1/11)

While the December snowfall finally started to melt last week, Gov. Bill Richardson and New Mexico's federal delegates were working to secure federal aid from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. U.S. Rep. Heather Wilson, who took a brief tour of Rio Rancho on Monday, along with U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce and U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, sent a letter to USDA Secretary Mike Johanns and President Bush seeking expedition of the review process and a timely award of assistance to the state.

Hotline Calling for Donations to Help Nebraskans (Nebraska TV, 1/10)

The expedited disaster declaration signed by President Bush means that funding will become available to assist public entities in their recovery efforts following December's devastating ice storms. Help for individuals, however, is not included in that declaration. Limited assistance has been made available through other sources.

Some cities spend millions on roads (Denver Post, 1/10)

Just when snow-removal officials thought they were turning the corner, a fourth wintry blast in a month - this one predicted to bring bitter cold along with more snow - is forecast to begin Thursday. Eating the most dollars are the back-to-back snowstorms Dec. 20-22 and Dec. 28-29, although a small snowstorm last Thursday and Friday

nibbled some more. Officials said calculating the costs of overtime, contractors, sand and salt, equipment and fuel is difficult as one storm blends into the next.

Nebraska: Power may be weeks away for some (Omaha World Herald, 1/10)

Nebraska electric utilities sustained more than \$200 million in damage from the recent ice storms, Gov. Dave Heineman said Wednesday. "This is probably the most devastating ice storm we've ever had in Nebraska," Heineman said.

Snow itself delaying FEMA aid paperwork (Rocky Mountain News, 1/10)

There's one big reason for some of the delay in processing federal disaster applications for some of the southeastern Colorado counties hit hardest by the Blizzard of 2006. FEMA rules require documentation such as snowfall measurements that can be measured against the historical average. But in some areas, state officials say there are snow gauges that no one has been able to get to because they're buried under snowdrifts.

IL Officials Seek Additional Disaster Assistance (Edwardsville Intelligencer, 1/10)

The area's four senators and congressmen sent a letter to federal officials this week, urging them to declare Madison County - and nine others - as federal disaster areas. Those counties were passed over when President George Bush issued emergency declarations for 26 other Illinois counties.

NE, KS Struggle After Winter Storm (Disaster News Network, 1/10)

Some residents in Kansas and Nebraska may not have power back for another month because of the New Year's weekend ice storm. In Nebraska alone, more than 2,300 miles of power lines were brought down by the storm, not to mention the number of transformers and power stations badly damaged as well. More than 28 counties are affected.

Nebraskans without electricity are urged to find shelter (Omaha World Herald, 1/9)

Conditions are expected to go from bad to worse for the roughly 8,000 customers of Nebraska utilities who remain without power: Unseasonably high temperatures are expected to give way to frigid weather later this week. Utility officials encouraged people to find warm shelter.

More cattle feared dead in SE Colorado blizzard (Rocky Mountain News, 1/9)

The number of cattle killed in an end-of-year blizzard in southeastern Colorado may climb to 10,000, or about triple earlier estimates, livestock officials said Monday. "If I had to go with one estimate between 3,500 and 10,000, I'd go closer to 10,000," said Bill Hammerich, chief executive officer of the Colorado Livestock Association.

Lutheran Family Services Continues To Help Victims in NC (PR Newswire, 1/8)

Nearly 250 families continue to face unmet needs, such as replacement housing, as a result of flooding from Hurricane Ivan. Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas (LFS Carolinas) has been helping victims of Hurricane Ivan in Western North Carolina, since the floods of 2004. Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has just granted LFS Carolinas an additional \$90,000 to continue assisting those with unmet needs as a result of the flood.

President Declares CO Disaster (Journal Advocate, 1/8)

The Denver Post reported that more than 100 people were stranded in cars, and emergency workers were checking cars on the road for any people inside. Arvada West High School was serving as an emergency shelter. In the past three weeks, the Front Range has weathered snowstorms that shut down Denver International Airport during the busy holiday travel period, stranded drivers who had to be rescued in southeast Colorado, stressed thousands of head of cattle, and blanketed roads.

CO, Still Recovering From 2 Storms, Is Hit With a 3rd (Sarasota Herald Tribune, 1/6)

Another winter storm bore down on snow-weary Colorado on Friday, complicating the recovery from back-to-back blizzards in December and raising fears that livestock losses would continue to mount. At least 1,000 head of cattle were confirmed dead, most of them smothered by drifts when they bunched together along fence lines.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Grant Would Aid Disaster Planning for Pets (Washington Post, 1/11)

Emergency planners acknowledge that they can evacuate and shelter only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands in the Washington region who might need help in the event of a terrorist act or natural catastrophe. And an even smaller fraction of the area's household pets are accounted for in disaster planning. That is why the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted this week to seek \$200,000 in DHS grant money to develop a more coherent blueprint for evacuating and caring for domestic animals.

Scientists begin quake readiness study (LA Times, 1/10)

When the great Ft. Tejon earthquake ripped the San Andreas fault 150 years ago this week, the shaking was so powerful it shook the Kern River from its banks and for a moment made it run upstream, according to accounts from the day. If such a quake occurred today -- and scientists say we are overdue for one in Southern California -- it would cause \$150 billion or more in damage, disrupt water and power supplies for Los Angeles and pancake buildings from San Bernardino to the L.A. Basin.

States, Locals Invest More in Communications (Federal Computer Weekly, 1/10)

State and local governments will boost their technology investment by 40 percent in the next five years as they struggle to overcome communications problems that stymie coordinated emergency response efforts, according to a report released Jan. 10. Technology spending will rise from \$3.2 billion in 2006 to \$4.4 billion in 2011 as public safety agencies push to bring real-time and on-demand communications to response efforts.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Recovery grants forecast retracted (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/11)

The much-maligned administrator of Louisiana's Road Home program is backing off a statement last month that it would hand out 500 grants a day to homeowners by the end of January. In the 25 days since Road Home administrator Michael Byrne assured angry Louisiana Recovery Authority board members of the impending flow of housing aid, the program has averaged fewer than three closings a day.

LRA shifts stance on private schools (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/11)

In what would be a policy reversal, Louisiana's storm-damaged private schools and colleges are slated to receive \$40 million to cover the local matches for FEMA assistance. Under a Louisiana Recovery Authority plan presented Wednesday to lawmakers, the cash would be the private institutions' first cut of \$2.3 billion in federal money that the LRA has dedicated to infrastructure repairs.

St. Tammany Parish still healing from Katrina (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/10)

Recovery efforts continue in St. Tammany Parish more than 16 months after Hurricane Katrina passed through south Louisiana, with permanent housing, an increased population and transportation issues topping the administration's priority list. The storm has brought more people to the parish, which can be both good and bad.

FEMA Awards Another \$5.1 Million In TX Disaster Aid (Media Newswire, 1/9)

Following Rita, the State of Texas has received and administered more than \$368 million in Public Assistance grants from FEMA to reimburse state and local government units. The latest obligation funds the following two projects on a cost-shared basis: Texas Department of Transportation - \$4 million for extraordinary expenses incurred for emergency protective measures during response and recovery efforts.

Recovery District planning to build 10 modular schools (N.O. Times Picayune, 1/9)

Even after the state-run Recovery School District completes its plans to erect at least 10 modular campuses around the city, some children in eastern New Orleans will have to be bused to schools in other parts of town next school year.

State Farm Negotiating Gulf Claims Settlement (New York Times, 1/8)

State Farm, the biggest home insurer in the nation, is in the final stages of settling hundreds of lawsuits over its payments for homes wrecked by Hurricane Katrina along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, lawyers briefed on the talks said yesterday. The settlement of 639 lawsuits for \$80 million could be the first step in resolving a bitter legal battle between homeowners and their insurers that had threatened to drag on for years and has already slowed Mississippi's recovery since the storm in August 2005.

Survey: Despite Katrina, 9th Ward fit to come back as it was (Associated Press, 1/7)

The predominantly black neighborhoods known as the 9th Ward can be brought back largely as they existed before Hurricane Katrina flooded them, a survey contends. The finding contradicts the common perception that the neighborhoods are so damaged that they need to be rebuilt from scratch, said urban planners who conducted the survey.

Small businesses struggling post-Katrina (Bellevue News Democrat, 1/6)

Across New Orleans, where some storefronts remain boarded up and the general pace of the recovery remains sluggish. Shop owners say they've cut hours in response to a reduced customer base. Some have closed or are considering closing. Those that remain say they need more customers and action by government and trade groups to avert a crisis. State and local tourism officials acknowledge the city's tourism-reliant economy is struggling, but say they're taking steps to help.

Source: Bellevue News Democrat, 1/6/07.

Jefferson closing door on trailers (New Orleans Times Picayune, 1/6)

The waning phase of the FEMA trailer era begins this month in Jefferson Parish as local governments set in motion plans to clear the temporary housing from parish neighborhoods. Jefferson inspectors plan to sweep the parish on the weekend of Jan. 20 and Jan. 21, posting notices on trailers and storage containers, alerting residents about the parish's April 1 deadline to remove unneeded units.