

## **Disaster News Update –July 14 to 20, 2007**

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

- **Drought:** California, Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, New Mexico, Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota, Utah
- **Fire:** Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, Texas, Virginia
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Iowa, New York
- **Technological Accident:** New York City (Explosion)

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

- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (7/17)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, and Tornadoes (7/7)
- [Kansas](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (7/2)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (7/2)
- [Texas](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (6/29)
- Fire Declarations: [Washington \(7/8\)](#), [South Dakota \(7/8\)](#), [Nevada \(7/8\)](#), [California \(7/8\)](#), [Utah \(7/7\)](#), [California \(7/7\)](#), [Nevada \(7/6\)](#), [Nevada \(7/6\)](#), [Utah \(6/30\)](#), [California \(6/29\)](#), [Hawaii \(6/28\)](#), [California \(6/24\)](#), [Alaska \(6/22\)](#), [Colorado \(6/19\)](#)

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Katrina Volunteers Feel Unwanted** (Associated Press, 7/19)

They gave Greg Porter the key to the city for his volunteer work after Hurricane Katrina. Then, he says, they showed him the door. Porter received widespread acclaim - including an award from the White House - for founding God's Katrina Kitchen, a faith-based relief operation that has served more than 1 million meals to the storm's victims and the volunteers who helped them. But the roadside-tent operation has been forced to move for the second time since September, because of what officials say were neighborhood complaints. Unable to find a new home, Porter expects to close God's Katrina Kitchen at the end of the month. With the government overwhelmed in Katrina's immediate aftermath, tens of thousands of volunteers from across the country poured into Mississippi and Louisiana and performed heroic service. But now, some are finding their help is no longer welcome.

#### **Volunteers, not angels, are heaven-sent to homeowners** (USA Today, 7/19)

Nearly two years after Hurricane Katrina, much of the city is deserted. Yet many of those surveying this scarred landscape see reason for hope. It arrives, in wave after wave, on the sunburned faces and sweaty backs of hundreds of thousands of volunteers who come to rebuild the Gulf Coast. To many weary residents, every church van with out-of-state plates seems like a beacon of light, a sign they have not been forgotten. Though volunteers come from all backgrounds, many of those making the pilgrimage say they're called by faith. They aim to comfort the afflicted, house the homeless and, in the words of Jewish tradition, "heal the world." Katrina survivors say they need every volunteer.

The 2005 storm destroyed 70,000 residences in Mississippi and 200,000 in the New Orleans area. About 45,000 families in Louisiana and 19,000 in Mississippi still are living in trailers provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Many credit religious volunteers with much of the region's progress. About 11,000 properties in New Orleans have been improved in some way, either through gutting, boarding up or cutting the grass. Non-profit charities have gutted nearly 4,700 houses, says David Robinson-Morris, a spokesman for Mayor Ray Nagin. More than 500,000 volunteers from 250 organizations -- both religious and non-religious -- have worked in Mississippi, says Marsha Meeks Kelly, executive director of the state's Commission for Volunteer Service. At least 155,000 volunteers have served in Louisiana, although FEMA volunteer liaison Mary Sutton says many relief groups have concentrated more on building than on keeping records. With so many independent groups and individuals chipping in, officials say the total number of volunteers may never be completely tallied.

<b>Religious charities</b>	<b>Total volunteers</b>	<b>Homes improved</b>
Adventist Community Services	2,200	150
American Baptist Men	600	12
Baptist Builders	374	10
Brethren Disaster Ministries	1,608	352
Catholic Charities USA	15,481	2,550
Christian Disaster Response	238	35
Christian Reformed World Relief Cmte	2,972	255
Church of Scientology	1,000	N/A
Convoy of Hope (Christian)	16,962	2,828
Episcopal Relief & Development	18,303	2,471
Friends Disaster Service	1,550	96
Habitat for Humanity (Christian)	71,412	2,896
Islamic Relief	122	22
International Aid (Christian)	1,250	N/A
Lutheran Disaster Response	26,585	8,242
Medical Teams International (Christian)	437	428
Mennonite Disaster Service (incl Amish)	9,000	750
Nazarene Disaster Response	15,000	200
Nechama (Jewish)	600	200
Operation Blessing	7,598	1,348
Presbyterian Church U.S.A.	29,345	3,380
Salvation Army	15,232	N/A
Samaritan's Purse	12,026	5,000
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	4,000	N/A
Southern Baptist Convention	175,378	5,136
Tzu Chi Foundation (Buddhist)	1,319	N/A
United Church of Christ NDM	4,985	792
United Methodist Committee on Relief	56,656	15,643
Volunteers of America	14,000	430
Totals	506,233	53,226

**Volunteer Efforts in Pearlinton and Gulfport** (FEMA, 7/18)

Some say there is strength in numbers. If true, the cities of Pearlinton and Gulfport will have the strength of ten Samsons thanks to a little hope, a lot of youth, and the hard work of some extraordinary citizens. Approximately 5,000 bags of groceries and 50,000 pounds of water will be delivered to two Mississippi Gulf Coast communities. More than 2,000 teenage volunteers from around the U.S. and the world will build at least 17 homes and repair dozens more. All of this will be completed in five days, beginning July 23. The Pearlinton Recovery Center and the Crosspoint Church in Gulfport will assist in hosting the fresh-faced volunteers when they arrive by the busloads to participate in the Momentum Youth Conference, at the University of Southern Mississippi. Sponsored by Church Effectiveness (CE) National, the Momentum Conference is an annual gathering of junior high and high school students and their youth leaders. This year's theme is Xtreme Makeover: Heart Edition. Fifty adults, all with construction backgrounds, will serve as project managers to guide volunteers as they build 17 homes in Pearlinton and work on various home repair projects in Gulfport.

**With hurricane season underway, Red Cross to get message out** (Daily News, 7/15)

Coming soon to a neighborhood near you: a hulking white metal container stocked with 1,100 cots and 2,000 blankets. The 3,040-cubic-foot storage bins - they resemble the containers atop the back of tractor-trailers - are part of a \$5 million effort to make Long Island better equipped to deal with a hurricane or other disaster. "Is Long Island prepared for a hurricane? I hate say to it, but no, we are not," said Frank Cassano, chief executive officer of the American Red Cross in Nassau County. "But we are better prepared now this year - more than ever before." The Red Cross bought 30 of the durable shipping containers, which measure 40 by 8 by 9.5 feet, and 15 are headed to Suffolk and 15 to Nassau. In Nassau, the containers are being delivered to 12 shelters in communities such as Old Westbury, Wantagh, Glen Cove, Manhasset, Massapequa and New Hyde Park. Nassau Community College, which is the county's main and largest shelter due to its proximity to the designated coastal evacuation route, will get three containers. In Suffolk County, the 15 containers will go to one shelter each, where they will serve as storage centers so that evacuees who take refuge in churches and schools and other facilities can sleep on a cot instead of a pew or gym floor. "These containers will allow our volunteers to open up a shelter more quickly and efficiently in the event of a disaster," Cassano said, adding that they have room for food and water that would be delivered just ahead of a storm.

**COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS**

**Town earns designation of 'StormReady'** (Buffalo News, 7/17)

Cheektowaga, the town that has seen seven-foot snowfalls as well as tornadoes, is now "StormReady," according to the National Weather Service. That doesn't mean residents should start getting hurricane shutters and prepare for mud slides. But if those weather phenomena should strike Erie County's second largest town, emergency personnel and federal forecasters are ready. "StormReady encourages communities to take a new proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations and public

awareness," said Judith Levan, warning coordination meteorologist at the local National Weather Service forecast office. Levan and Thomas Niziol, meteorologist in charge of the Buffalo office, presented the town a plaque and praised the training that town employees and some residents underwent. Cheektowaga is one of five municipalities in New York State to achieve the designation and joins about 1,200 communities nationwide. It is the only one in Western New York.

**Stores, instead of FEMA, counted on for disaster supplies** (Houston Chronicle, 7/15)

When the next hurricane hits Texas, the Gulf region's recovery time may depend less on FEMA and much more on Wal-Mart, H-E-B, Home Depot and other large retailers. "If FEMA shows up, good," said Jack Colley, chief of the Governor's Division of Emergency Management. "But we're not waiting." Call it one more example of the lingering Hurricane Katrina effect, but Colley and his team are looking past the traditional go-through-FEMA-to-get-ice kind of emergency management model. This new strategy, borne during 2005's Hurricane Rita and fine-tuned in the two years since by the state's emergency agency, has retailers conducting mock drills alongside government officials. "FEMA was an old contact point for ice, water, etc," Colley explained from his agency's state operations center in the basement of Texas Department of Public Safety headquarters in Austin. "The private sector is willing and able to do this for us." For the past two years, Colley and Texas Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw have cultivated direct relationships with retailers after watching Louisiana and Mississippi officials dial FEMA in vain for food, water and other aid. "FEMA can't compete with the private sector," Colley said. "They do it quicker, smarter, faster every day."

**Guard Deployments Weaken Public Safety** (Boston Globe, 7/14)

As the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq drag on, the frequent deployment of the National Guard is forcing some Massachusetts communities to do without a growing number of their "first responders," the police, firefighters, and other emergency workers who often double as part-time soldiers, according to a state public safety survey. State and local officials across the Commonwealth point to the pending deployment to Iraq of the 972d Military Police Company in Reading as an example. Of the 190 members who will be gone for a year or more, at least 30 work in law enforcement or other emergency services, according to a tally by the Executive Office of Public Safety. Five members of the unit, which will get a send-off from Nickerson Field at Boston University today, are members of the State Police. Nine are Department of Correction officers. The rest hail from nearly a dozen police, fire, and sheriff's departments across the state. Of the 341 first responders serving in the Massachusetts Air and Army National Guard, at least 50 will be on military deployment by this weekend, according the data. Officials do not believe that significantly jeopardizes overall efforts to fight crime and protect the public. But they are concerned about the effect of the deployments on smaller jurisdictions with fewer public safety employees that must make do when their Guard members are called up and then successfully reintegrate them when they complete tours of duty in combat zones.

**RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

**Ding Dong Daddies Down, but not Out** (Disaster News Network, 7/20)

"We might be down, but we're not out." That seems to be the prevailing attitude in this rural Arkansas town as it continues to recover from a powerful tornado that ripped through the area Feb. 24 with winds of 138 to 167 mph. More than 100 homes and mobile homes, along with 49 businesses, were damaged or destroyed. The storm, one of four that struck the region that weekend, injured 27 people. Since then, individuals inside and outside the town, along with community and faith-based organizations, have rallied to get the small (population about 5,200) community back on its feet. "People are still rebuilding and businesses are still getting up and trying to get going," said the Rev. Glenn Pettus of the Dumas First United Methodist Church. While progress has been made in the weeks and months after the tornado, much still remains to be done and concerns are being raised about the economic impact on residents – especially when school resumes in the fall - and on local businesses. "Some of the businesses are completely rebuilt and back up and running and some haven't even started," said Linda Weatherford, a resident who has been helping coordinate volunteers coming into the town. "Some are not coming back. People are having to find different jobs."

**New KS Counties Added for FEMA Declaration** (FEMA, 7/19)

FEMA announces that 21 counties affected by storms that began June 26 are now eligible for all categories of FEMA's Public Assistance. Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Elk, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson and Woodson counties are now approved for full Public Assistance. Previously these counties had been designated for emergency protective measures. Additionally, Crawford, Greenwood, Harper and Labette counties have been declared for all Public Assistance programs. "The additional public assistance in these counties is welcome news for the residents and public officials in the disaster areas," said Angie Morgan, state coordinating officer for the Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM). "This new assistance will rapidly assist our communities as they continue to rebound from the effects of these historic storms." The counties are now eligible for debris removal, emergency services related to the disaster, repair or replacement of damaged public facilities such as roads, buildings and utilities, and recreational facilities such as parks or playgrounds damaged by the storms.

**More KS Counties Now Eligible for Disaster Assistance** (FEMA, 7/19)

FEMA announced today that three additional counties are now eligible for FEMA's Individual Assistance to help homeowners, renters, and businesses recover from the effects of the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding from May 4 to June 1. McPherson, Smith and Pottawatomie counties were added to the May 6, 2007 major disaster declaration. A total of 24 counties in Kansas are now eligible for Individual Assistance as a result of the May storms. The earlier 21 counties designated to receive Individual Assistance are; Barton, Clay, Cloud, Comanche, Dickinson, Edwards, Ellsworth, Kiowa, Leavenworth, Lyon, Osage, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Pratt, Reno, Rice, Riley, Saline, Shawnee and Stafford.

**TX Flooding likely to worsen** (Houston Chronicle, 7/18)

The Trinity River Authority warned residents living below Lake Livingston dam to brace

for a significant and protracted flood, while two subdivisions above the dam have already been inundated. The rising floodwaters are the result of the state being hit with 44 straight days of rain of "biblical proportions," said assistant project manager Mark Waters. Above the dam, two subdivisions on the north side of Lake Livingston are already being swamped in Walker County. The lake, which supplies drinking water to Houston and covers 83,000 acres, is about 60 miles north of Harris County. A voluntary evacuation was ordered for the subdivisions, Deep River Plantation and Greenwich Shores. Authorities estimate several hundred people have evacuated and 30 to 40 homes there are filled with up to 4 feet of water. At the same time, authorities are closely monitoring a third subdivision, Riverside Harbor, where water has risen within an inch of some homes, said Charles Sturrock, Walker County's emergency management coordinator. The floodwaters are expected to continue rising today and then take a week to 10 days to recede, he said.

**President Declares Major Disaster for North Dakota** (FEMA, 7/17)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for North Dakota to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding during the period of June 2-18, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said federal funding is available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe storms and flooding. Areas covered by the declaration include Barnes, Bowman, Dickey, Grant, LaMoure, Logan, McHenry, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, and Stutsman counties. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Connee Lloyd the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Lloyd said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments

**Additional OK Counties Eligible for Individual Assistance** (FEMA, 7/14)

The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and FEMA announced today that three additional counties affected by the recent storms, flooding and tornadoes are now eligible for Individual Assistance. Comanche, Nowata and Pottawatomie have been added to the list of counties designated eligible for Individual Assistance. They join Ottawa and Washington counties, which were included in the original declaration. This brings the number of eligible counties to five. Comanche, Ottawa, Pottawatomie and Washington counties are already designated for emergency protective measures, limited to direct federal assistance under the Public Assistance program. State Coordinating Officer Fred W. Liebe said, "Oklahoma has suffered even more rain and extensive flooding in recent days. The assessments include both old and new flood damage. The addition of these new counties is crucial for their recovery."

**New KS Counties Eligible for Individual Disaster Assistance** (FEMA, 7/14)

FEMA announced today that four additional counties are now eligible for FEMA's Individual Assistance to help homeowners, renters and businesses recover from the effects of the storms and flooding that began June 26. Allen, Cowley, Labette and Linn

counties are added to the July 2, 2007, major disaster declaration. A total of nine counties are now eligible for individual assistance. "We are pleased with the addition of these four counties to the disaster declaration," said Angie Morgan, state coordinating officer for the Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM). "The residents in these areas have been looking for the assistance these disaster programs can provide while they recover." Elk, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho and Wilson counties were included in the original amendment to the declaration. Residents who suffered damages in any of the nine designated counties should register with FEMA.

## **PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

### **Four Metro New Orleans Governments Create Pact** (NO Times Picayune, 7/19)

Four metro New Orleans governments are hammering out an agreement that calls for each parish to use its own resources to help save lives and property across its borders if a natural disaster strikes its neighbors harder than its own turf. The memorandum of understanding among New Orleans and Jefferson, Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes would represent a cooperative approach to emergency response, following a common practice across the country. "For the first time, you're seeing some unification of the four-parish region, where we're going to manage disasters on a regional level for quicker response, instead of just waiting around for the state or federal response," said Deano Bonano, Jefferson's deputy chief administrative officer who supervises emergency management. The Jefferson Parish Council voted unanimously to approve the document Wednesday, following Plaquemines and St. Bernard, whose governments already have signed it. The agreement now awaits action by the New Orleans City Council.

### **Limited Capacity Is Seen in Flu Defenses** (New York Times, 7/18)

More than a year after President Bush unveiled a plan for coping with a pandemic flu outbreak, the federal government still has limited capacity to detect a disease outbreak and track its progress across the country. The government has also decided that it will not close the borders if a pandemic flu outbreak occurs somewhere in the world. "The reality is that there are tremendous challenges to sealing our borders to begin with," said Dr. Rajeev Venkayya, special assistant to the president for biodefense. "Secondly, we believe that if a pandemic virus emerges anywhere in the globe, it is inevitable that it will arrive here in the U.S. irrespective of the actions we take at the borders." The government will try to limit the number of arriving people who might be infected with the virus and detain those suspected of harboring the virus, Dr. Venkayya said. But it will also try to allow the flow of goods and people across the border to continue, he said.

## **GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

### **New Orleans Street repairs may start in 6 weeks** (N.O. Times Picayune, 7/19)

Work could begin in four to six weeks on the first of hundreds of storm-damaged streets that New Orleans officials say FEMA should pay to repair. The roads in line for work are in Lakeview and Gentilly, near the sites of the 17th Street Canal and London Avenue

Canal levee breaches. The streets -- 16th, 18th, 38th, Spencer, Warrington, Wickfield, Wildair and North Windsor -- are among those the city says were damaged by Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters. The work in most cases will involve selective patching of roadways. FEMA has yet to agree to pay for any specific street repairs, but city Public Works Director Robert Mendoza told a City Council committee Wednesday that he wants to begin the repairs soon using money left over from a 2000 city bond issue. The issue included \$50 million for repairing "minor streets." Mendoza said he is confident that FEMA eventually will reimburse the city for the work. After Katrina, FEMA refused for a long time to accept the city's position that even though many streets looked sound, their surfaces and foundations had been damaged by the flood.

**Recovery District works on schools** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 7/18);

Scrambling to prepare for an influx of thousands of new students this fall in New Orleans, the Recovery School District has inked agreements that will allow it to use portable buildings at the old Holy Cross School site in the Lower 9th Ward and use a Poydras Street commercial building as a "welcome school" for late-enrolling students, state Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek said Tuesday. But Pastorek said that with heavy rains in recent days causing delays, he is anxious that contractors won't have time to finish work on all of the portable school buildings needed to house students who are expected to attend schools of the state-run district. "I don't have a super-high level of comfort that we're going to make it on all of these buildings" by the Sept. 4 opening of school, Pastorek said in a New Orleans interview. "We're getting very close to the edge." The superintendent said the Recovery District, which has directly served as many as 17,000 students, will prepare for as many as 7,000 new students, based on rough projections of a swelling school-age population for Orleans Parish.

**New Orleans Airport gets cash to ready for worst** (N.O. Times Picayune, 7/16);

Should Louis Armstrong International Airport ever stare down another hurricane of Katrina's strength, operators expect to have a plan in place to deflect much of the fury. FEMA granted the New Orleans airport \$49,155 this month to put together a plan that would reduce its vulnerability to natural disasters. The money will be used to hire outside consultants who will outline projects that are the most needed, said Mario Rodriguez, the airport's deputy director of planning and development. "And the projects, they're going to be big," he said. The effort, known as a hazard mitigation plan, will look at shoring buildings against wind damage and fortifying the airport's electrical and water systems, Rodriguez said. Work on the plan, the first of its kind for the airport, will begin this hurricane season and finish within a year, he said.

**Creative use of grant money possible, FEMA says** (N.O. Times Picayune, 7/14)

Local government critics have tagged FEMA's public assistance program a tedious, paper-pushing exercise that attempts to restore infrastructure to its pre-disaster condition, a rebuilding process that often produces headaches over verification and squabbling over replacement value. But the federal agency insists that the program, which finances a wide variety of infrastructure restoration, doesn't have to return everything to how it used to be. The rules allow a number of innovative uses of the federal money. FEMA regulations allow public assistance grants to be used for "improved" projects that go beyond restoring a damaged facility and, by mixing the public assistance money with that secured from

other sources, make the facility better or bigger. A school system could replace three destroyed schools, for instance, with two improved campuses, in more sensible locations where more students have resettled. The rules also allow "alternate" projects that declare the damaged facility no longer needed or wanted, and put the grant money to a different use -- although, in such instances, the grant is cut by up to 25 percent. A police department might, for example, take money FEMA initially targeted for rebuilding a district headquarters and instead put it toward a jail or crime lab. In that scenario, FEMA would be expected to provide no more than 75 percent of what it would have paid to replace the district headquarters. Especially in areas of New Orleans ravaged by flooding, FEMA officials had expected to see liberal use of the improved and alternate provisions in the PA program. But so far, few local government agencies have taken advantage of the opportunity to reinvent their portfolio of facilities.