

Disaster News Update – June 23 to 29, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Arizona, Wyoming, Nevada, Kentucky, Mississippi
- **Fire:** California, Alaska, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, Florida, North Carolina
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Texas, Oklahoma

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (6/11)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (6/7)
- [Nebraska](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (6/6)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, and Tornadoes (5/25)
- [Rhode Island](#): Severe Storms and Inland and Coastal Flooding (5/25)
- [Kentucky](#): Severe Storms, Flooding, Mudslides, and Rock Slides (5/25)
- Fire Declarations: [Hawaii \(6/28\)](#), [California \(6/24\)](#), [Alaska, \(6/22\)](#), [Colorado \(6/19\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Turnout Low for Disaster Training Program (Palm Beach Post, 6/27)

It's been six years since the anthrax scare at the AMI building put Boca Raton in the national spotlight. Is Palm Beach County ready if something like that happens again, but on a massive scale? Based on the response so far from volunteers needed to assist if the area becomes the target of biological warfare or a flu pandemic, it's somewhat doubtful. Just 55 of the 5,500 to 6,000 trained volunteers needed to handle a countywide emergency showed up Tuesday at the South County Civic Center in suburban Delray Beach to participate in the Cities Readiness Initiative, a pilot program to help cities deliver emergency medical supplies in the event of a large-scale public-health crisis. Volunteer interest has been nominal. In January 2006, the county was designated a Cities Readiness Initiative agency and charged with the task of treating and assisting with the needs of 1.3 million residents in 48 hours.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Broward County (FL) storm registry to aid the vulnerable (Miami Herald, 6/24)

This hurricane season, Broward County is ready to help residents who can't help themselves. Everyone else should be prepared. New programs such as the Vulnerable Population Registry and 311 hot line will give cities a better idea of who most needs help, but self-sufficiency is the No. 1 message from the county's emergency managers. Broward residents should have enough nonperishable food and bottled water to last every member of the household at least three days, said Judy Sarver, a spokeswoman for the county. Following Hurricane Wilma, relief workers trudged door-to-door, looking for people who were trapped in their homes. Elevators were useless without power.

Volunteers joined county workers to get to thousands of frail elderly and disabled people who couldn't use stairs to get out of apartments on upper floors. Now, those who might need help are being asked to join an electronic registry being maintained by the county. Launched last week, the Vulnerable Population Registry will list names and addresses of those with special needs. "It's for people who would be in danger during a prolonged power outage," said Judy Sarver, a county spokesperson. "If they would have a problem walking down the steps, if the elevator was out, or if they couldn't contact their caregiver, this service would be for them." The addresses will be mapped, and geographic pockets with high numbers of vulnerable residents would be targeted by emergency workers.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

OK begins cleaning up after flood, more rain expected (Associated Press, 6/28)

As rain continued to fall Thursday on an already-sodden state, forecasters warned that conditions that have caused widespread flooding and damage throughout Oklahoma could continue through the middle of next week. The National Weather Service on Thursday recorded rainfall in Oklahoma City for the 16th straight day, two days longer than the previous record, set from May 29 to June 11 in 1937. In Oklahoma City, the yearly precipitation total entering Thursday was 29.08 inches, more than 10 1/2 inches above normal and already more than the 27.84 inches that fell in the state capital during all of 2006, when much of the state was experiencing drought. Tales of people having to be rescued from high waters continued to pour in. Television footage from eastern Oklahoma County showed rescuers successfully reaching a young man who was sitting on a tree branch in the North Canadian River and pulling him from the water. The National Weather Service in Tulsa issued a flood watch from Friday morning through early Monday for the Neosho River in Ottawa County near Commerce in far northeastern Oklahoma. The river is forecast to rise above its flood stage of 15 feet and crest at 19.1 feet on Saturday morning, which could limit access to low-lying areas of Miami.

More rain falling in central Texas, flooding has killed 11 (Associated Press, 6/28)

More rain fell Thursday in flood-weary parts of Texas, where evacuations were under way and residents were bracing for even more of the constant downpours that have killed 11 people in recent days. Officials reported calls for dozens of rescues in San Antonio, and hundreds of people were being ordered to leave their homes near the bloated Brazos River in North Texas. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, acting as governor while Gov. Rick Perry is out of the country, surveyed damage Thursday in the lakeside community of Marble Falls, which was drenched by as much as 18 inches of rain early Wednesday. No one was killed, but there were 32 water rescues and widespread damage. In North Texas, rains continued falling west of Fort Worth, and evacuations of about 300 homes were ordered in Parker County as the Brazos River began creeping into some backyards. Firefighters and National Guard troops went door to door notifying residents of the mandatory evacuation, but some refused to leave, said Lt. Jason Williams of the Parker County firefighters' search and rescue team. Overnight rainfall in Central Texas was far short of the 10 inches that were forecast, but more was expected Thursday, and flash flood warnings were in effect. Storm systems near Austin and San Antonio were expected

to dump as much as 10 inches Thursday, the National Weather Service said. Marble Falls, about 40 miles northwest of Austin, took the brunt of the deluge Tuesday and Wednesday, with numerous people stuck on rooftops, in trees and on houses. The city was spared rain overnight, but the skies opened up again late Thursday morning.

Five More MO Counties To Get FEMA Public Assistance (FEMA, 6/27)

Following additional damage assessments, FEMA has approved Public Assistance funding for Caldwell, Clinton, Lafayette, Linn and Sullivan counties to help local governments recover from damage associated with the severe storms and flooding May 5 - 18. Public Assistance funding goes to local governments, state agencies and certain approved, private, nonprofit organizations, including public utilities, to assist them in the recovery. Federal funding is also available for hazard mitigation measures statewide to increase protection against future events. The federal disaster declaration June 11 for Missouri made FEMA Public Assistance funding available in 19 counties, including Andrew, Atchison, Bates, Carroll, Cass, Chariton, Daviess, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Howard, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, Ray, Saline and Worth. The amendment approved June 27 adds Caldwell, Clinton, Lafayette, Linn and Sullivan. Application procedures for local governments will be explained at a series of federal/state applicant briefings with locations to be announced in the affected area by recovery officials. Approved public repair projects are paid through the state from funding provided by FEMA and other participating federal agencies. The declaration June 11 also made FEMA's Individual Assistance available to homeowners, renters and business owners in 17 counties, including Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Carroll, Chariton, Clay, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Holt, Jackson, Lafayette, Livingston, Morgan, Nodaway, Osage and Platte.

Flood aid is flowing to hard-hit NJ residents (Newark Star Ledger, 6/27)

Nearly 16,000 New Jerseyans whose homes were flooded in April's nor'easter have applied for grants from FEMA, and \$16.95 million in payments have been approved so far, officials said. The powerful storm that pounded the Garden State on April 15-16 caused an estimated \$180 million in damage, forced thousands of families from their homes, and damaged businesses from Somerset to Gloucester counties. Thousands of people sought refuge in shelters set up in schools and churches, and a federal disaster was declared in 12 counties. So far, 9,344 homeowners and renters have been approved for \$16.95 million in individual assistance grants from FEMA. Residents can use the money to pay for such things as home repair or rent, said FEMA spokeswoman Elizabeth Childs. Another 594 individuals and 39 businesses have been approved for \$20.3 million in disaster assistance loans from the SBA, she said. The deadline for applying to the SBA and FEMA was Monday.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Chertoff, governors appeal for storm ready coast (Associated Press, 6/28)

DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff joined governors from Mississippi and Alabama on Wednesday in appealing for Gulf Coast residents to get prepared for the height of

hurricane season. Some 400 delegates to the three-day Mississippi/Alabama Hurricane Conference at the Imperial Palace Casino in Biloxi were urged to return home and sound the "get-ready" storm alarm. Chertoff said FEMA is better prepared since Katrina struck Aug. 29, 2005, having expanded and filled 95 percent of its jobs. At a brief news conference before he returned to Washington, D.C., Chertoff said FEMA has been "retooled dramatically" and will be more involved at earlier stages of a disaster. "We've got a lot more tools," he said. He said he expects FEMA will work "side by side with the state from the beginning." Forecasters have predicted an above-average year for the season that runs June 1 through November. They believe there will be 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to 10 of them becoming hurricanes and three to five of those reaching at least Category 3 strength.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

4K Katrina aid cases on file in Jackson Co. (Associated Press, 6/28)

More than 4,000 Jackson County families are still working toward recovery nearly two years after Hurricane Katrina. "Two years after Katrina, people are past the stories of the little old lady living in a moldy home," said Michelle Wilson, executive director of the Rebuild Jackson County Long Term Recovery Organization. "They want to know the real number of people who need help." Eleven agencies are working in recovery and relief in Jackson County, Wilson's organization reports. There are 3,137 cases open in the county, and 875 cases waiting to be assigned to a case manager. "There is still a lot of need in Jackson County," said Wilson. A case manager determines what the family's needs are, and then helps the family with recovery. This usually entails the case manager finding the funds and labor to rebuild. "There are people who want to know why families are still in FEMA trailers," said Wilson. "Most of the time it's money related."

New Orleans population reaches 262,000 (New Orleans Times Picayune, 6/28);

New Orleans had a residential population of 262,000 in May, 17.5 percent higher than in July 2006 and nearly 58 percent of its pre-Katrina total of 455,000, a New Orleans research firm said Wednesday. Since July, according to population estimates compiled by GCR & Associates Inc., nearly 39,000 residents returned to New Orleans in spite of the still-difficult living conditions in many neighborhoods ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Greg Rigamer, CEO of GCR, said the city gained about 7,000 residents between March and May. The rate of return has been steady since last summer, he said, indicating that the city's recovery has not leveled off, as some have suggested, and that more people continue to move into the city each month than leave it. GCR maintains an index for each of New Orleans' 10,000 city blocks, monitoring activities such as utility usage, new building permits and calls for service. By tracking the activity on each block, it is able to document resettlement patterns and changes in the population, Rigamer said.

For displaced youths, a port in the storm (Newark Star Ledger, 6/25)

At 4 a.m. yesterday, 20 of Hurricane Katrina's youngest survivors were evacuated once again, airlifted to Montclair courtesy of Continental and JetBlue airlines. This time, the relocation was temporary, voluntary and short-term. In fact, it was a welcome change.

Dozens of members of St. Paul's Baptist Church greeted the children at a welcome barbecue to kick off two-week vacations in the homes of local host families. They were welcomed with balloons, a clown, blaring music, carnival games and stuffed animals. These 20 children are just a smattering of the estimated 183,000 children displaced by Hurricane Katrina, according to a 2005 Department of Homeland Security report to Congress. Thousands of displaced children have yet to return to their homes in the hardest-hit parishes of New Orleans. An estimated 1,000 children live in Renaissance Village alone, the FEMA trailer park the 20 children visiting New Jersey have called home since the storm.

House OKs state-chartered bank (New Orleans Times Picayune, 6/25)

The Louisiana House of Representatives on Sunday endorsed the idea of a state-chartered bank, cast by its supporters as a way to spur private investment in the rebuilding of public infrastructure devastated by Hurricane Katrina. But the concept hinges on financing sources that New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and other city leaders have not yet disclosed. Senate Bill 301, sponsored by Sen. Edwin Murray, D-New Orleans, would create the Louisiana Infrastructure Bank, run as a branch of the state treasury. Despite several members' concerns, the measure passed 100-2. It now returns to the Senate, where the upper chamber can concur with House changes or force the bill to a conference committee of representatives and senators charged with proposing a compromise. The bank would serve as a depository for private investors seeking to help finance public recovery efforts in south Louisiana. It would also offer local government entities low-interest loans to help jump-start infrastructure projects that are eligible for reimbursement by FEMA's Public Assistance Program. Nagin and some other local officials have said many projects lag because of cash-flow problems.

\$1B Road Home funding plans proposed in the Legislature (Associated Press, 6/24)

The Senate Finance Committee agreed to a plan backed by the Blanco administration to reshuffle state and federal dollars to pour \$1 billion more into the Road Home program, to help plug an estimated \$5 billion shortfall. Some of the pieces of the funding puzzle will require approval from the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the federal government. A look at the money that would be used for the Road Home, under the bill headed to the Senate floor: \$300 million in federal recovery block grant aid the state planned to use to build a new charity hospital in New Orleans. The state's plans are hung up amid partisan disagreements in Washington about the hospital, so state officials are proposing to use state dollars and borrowing for the charity hospital and reallocate the federal dollars to the Road Home. \$267 million in federal recovery block grant aid that was slated to be used for repairs to state buildings damaged by the 2005 hurricanes. Congress agreed to waive the state's match for FEMA repairs to buildings, and the state plans to borrow some building repair funds by issuing bonds, freeing up the federal dollars. \$305.5 million in state dollars paid to FEMA for the state's portion of the costs for people and households who received aid after the hurricanes. The state match requirement was waived by Congress, so FEMA will reimburse the state for its match payments. \$67 million in unbudgeted state cash from the current fiscal year. \$60.5 million in other federal recovery block grant aid that must be reallocated by the LRA. It's unclear if the money will be taken from a business loan and grant program, a rental aid program or a

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program to help local governments cover the costs of their rebuilding plans. The LRA meets Monday and is scheduled to discuss the matter.