

## **Disaster News Update – June 9 to 22, 2007**

### **RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 14 days)**

- **Drought:** California, Arizona, Nevada, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wyoming, Kentucky
- **Fire:** Alaska, California, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Arizona, New Mexico
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Texas, New York, Kansas, Missouri
- **Structure Fire:** South Carolina

### **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)
- [South Dakota](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes and Flooding (5/22)
- [Massachusetts](#): Severe Storms and Inland and Coastal Flooding (5/16)
- [Connecticut](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (5/11)
- Fire Declarations: [Colorado \(6/19\)](#), [New Jersey \(5/16\)](#), [California \(5/10\)](#)

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **CT Red Cross Seeking Volunteers** (Hartford Courant, 6/23)

The CT state chapter of the Red Cross is seeking more volunteers. The group, which has 7,000 volunteers statewide, hopes to attract about 150 people - a 2 percent increase - to help respond to disasters, assist at disaster scenes and work at blood drives. The new radio and print ads, created with the help of a \$200,000 state grant, stress the fulfillment people get from volunteer work. Paul Shipman, the nonprofit agency's state relations representative, said the chapter is hoping to attract enough new helpers to be able to match the demographics of a specific region with volunteers of similar demographics. Volunteers also help with disaster preparedness training, CPR training and blood collection drives.

#### **St. Bernard Park Reopens Thanks to NGOs** (Disaster News Network, 6/15)

Residents in St. Bernard Parish will celebrate Saturday when a community park reopens after being severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina. The community is scheduled to gather at St. Bernard Community Park and Edward A. Kattengell Center in Arabi for a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by activities for children and adults throughout the day. The disaster relief charity Operation Blessing and local charity organization City of Hope are running the grand opening after having raised funds and rebuilding the park. "This has been a tremendous joy to me," said the Rev. Randy Millet, director of City of Hope and pastor of Adullam Christian Fellowship Church. "Everyone is extremely excited that this gym is being restored." When Katrina struck, the facility was heavily

damaged and many thought it would never be restored. Millet said that notion changed when Operation Blessing came knocking. Operation Blessing staff members first entered the damaged facility in December 2006 and saw not much had been done since Katrina flooded it with 9 feet of water. Mold covered the walls. In February, the rebuild project was launched and teams of volunteers went to work. Operation Blessing funded the entire project, but workers from near and far helped.

## COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

### **FL Program Helps People, Pets Find Storm Shelter** (St. Petersburg Times, 6/22)

Pinellas County emergency management officials are looking for residents or organizations willing to help members of their groups or others find safe places to ride out a hurricane. With help from emergency management officials, places of worship, businesses, and civic or community groups can help their members or employees find safe shelter. Here's how it works: The participating organization matches its members or employees who need to evacuate in a storm with others who live in non-evacuation areas. Pet owners can be matched with pet lovers, smokers can be matched with other smokers, families with children can be matched with child-safe houses. Pinellas County Emergency Management has also created a printable Disaster Survival Kit, which is a list of essential items to have on hand. To view the list, visit [www.pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency), click on "Hurricane Handbook" and follow the link to the emergency survival kit.

### **Faith-Based Disaster Training in Manhattan** (NY Blueprint, 6/13)

New York Disaster Interfaith Services Preparedness Training offers an emergency preparedness training forum that focuses on personal, congregational and community preparedness. The presentation includes how to put together a household disaster plan, a 'Go Bag,' a household emergency supply kit, and a community response plan — what to have in your head, hand, household and community center to be prepared for any emergency.

### **FL Gov. Details Preparedness Plan for Disabilities Community** (Gov't Tech., 6/11)

Florida Governor Charlie Crist introduced three new initiatives that will help coordinate services for persons with disabilities and improve hurricane and emergency preparedness for the disabilities community. The announcement came as he addressed thousands of persons with disabilities and their families at the ninth annual Family Café conference in Orlando. The Family Café serves as a clearinghouse of information about available services to meet their needs and how to secure those services. "I am deeply committed to increasing opportunities for persons with disabilities to live independently," Crist said. The Family Café has a long history of helping people learn about services that are available to meet their needs and the needs of the families. Later this summer, I will appoint a Commission on Disabilities that will build on the success stories we find at Family Café." The three initiatives announced by Governor Crist include creating a Governor's Commission on Disabilities, establishing a statewide disabilities coordinator and approving three new state-owned special needs shelters for persons with disabilities.

## **RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

### **CA Wildfire Burns 165 Homes** (Disaster News Network, 6/25)

A raging wildfire destroyed at least 165 homes and other structures and threatened some 500 others near the popular resort community of South Lake Tahoe. Among the buildings threatened was South Tahoe High School. A state of emergency was declared by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors as the 2,000-acre blaze continued to burn out of control and headed toward the town. Wind gusts of 35 miles per hour during the day helped push the blaze, but the winds subsided in the evening and firefighters were hopeful that cooler overnight temperatures in the 30s will allow them to get a handle on the fire. The fire was reported less than 5 percent contained. Hundreds of homes have been evacuated in the Angora Lakes Resort and in the north Upper Truckee area next to South Lake Tahoe. Residents in several other areas have been advised to be ready to evacuate. At least 1,000 people have already been evacuated. No injuries have been reported. More than 400 firefighters were battling the blaze which broke out around 2 p.m. Air tankers and helicopters were also being used, although windy conditions grounded some of the tankers, according to reports. An emergency shelter was set up at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center, according to city officials.

### **AK Wildfire Burns Homes** (Disaster News Network, 6/23)

At least 30 homes and another 40 outbuildings have been destroyed by a fast-moving wildfire burning in the Lower Kenai Peninsula, officials reported. No injuries have been reported. The Caribou Hills fire, burning about 14 miles east of Ninilchik, has charred about 50,000 acres since it began earlier this week. More than 250 firefighters were battling the blaze both on the ground and from the air with helicopters and air tankers. The fire was zero percent contained. The fire was one of 52 active wildfires reported in the state, three of which were on the Kenai Peninsula. Another blaze, dubbed the Big Su fire, was threatening some 40 cabins near Trapper Lake. The fire has burned about 9,000 acres.

### **NJ Victims Face FEMA Deadline** (Disaster News Network, 6/22)

With a Monday deadline looming, disaster recovery organizations in New Jersey are scrambling to get everyone affected by severe flooding in April registered with FEMA. "Everyone is frantically trying to get information out to people so they don't miss this deadline," said Rita Kelly, disaster response director for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Paterson. More than 15,000 people in 12 federally declared disaster counties in New Jersey have already registered with FEMA. Kelly's organization sent people door-to-door in hard-hit neighborhoods to give residents information about how to register with FEMA. She said the registration process can be confusing and overwhelming for some, but that recovery organizations can walk people through it and help them appeal to FEMA if they are rejected. Residents who dealt with FEMA in previous floods and did not receive any assistance are convinced the situation will be the same this time, she said. So far, only 1,600 loan applications have been submitted to the SBA from 13,000 loan

packets sent out, Kelly said. Catholic Charities has 60 flood clients and Kelly said she expected that number to increase.

**More Than \$8 Million Approved For TX Disaster Assistance** (FEMA, 6/22)

More than \$8 million in disaster aid has been approved for residents and businesses in five Texas counties, Atascosa, Denton, Maverick, Moore and Swisher, affected by the severe storms and tornadoes of April 21-24. Recovery information is as follows:

- More than 1,635 individuals have applied for FEMA assistance
- More than \$3.8 million has been approved for temporary housing and home repairs
- Nearly \$700,000 has been approved for the repair or replacement of personal property and disaster-related transportation, medical, dental and funeral expenses
- More than 1,262 damage inspections have been completed
- The SBA has approved over \$3.3 million in low-interest, disaster loans to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes
- 2,283 people visited Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)
- People living or working in the five disaster-designated counties whose jobs were affected by the severe storms and tornadoes on April 21-24 may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)
- The State Bar of Texas established a Disaster Hotline to assist people in the affected counties with basic legal questions
- Crisis counseling is available for those who live in disaster-designated counties
- Voluntary agencies continue to respond to the needs of disaster victims: The Unmet Needs Committee in Swisher and Moore counties is currently doing casework; The Interfaith Long-term Recovery Committee has a case management program in Maverick County; Both the Salvation Army and the Organization for Disaster Relief (ORD) are gearing up to provide services for victims of the recent severe storms and flooding

**GA Town Recovering from Tornado** (Disaster News Network, 6/22)

Walk down most any street in Americus today and you'd be hard pressed to remember the shambles the Georgia town was in just three-and-a-half months ago after a powerful tornado ripped through the community. "Unless you're looking for it [storm damage], you're not going to see it in most places," said Jody Wade, director of Sumter Disaster Recovery, an umbrella group of government-, community- and faith-based organizations helping to rebuild the Sumter County town. The March 1 twister, one of a swarm of tornadoes that tore through the South that day, damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses, including the local hospital. Since then, Sumter Disaster Recovery has worked on an estimated 468 homes, doing everything from removing debris to rebuilding. Another 60 cases are being worked on, with other cases continuing to trickle in. Exactly why people have not come forward sooner for assistance is a mystery to Wade. Door-to-door surveys of about 1,600 homes were conducted by Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Disaster Response Services. The effort generated about 40 requests for help. More than 2,000 volunteers, representing some 280 groups and organizations, have poured into the town since the tornado. At least 95 percent of the

groups who have responded are from the faith community. They range across all denominations and come from both the national and local level.

**Death Toll Climbs in TX Recovery Effort** (Disaster News Network, 6/20)

The death toll from flooding in several north Texas counties has climbed to six. Monday's storm dropped 4 to 6 inches of rain across much of north Texas and the NWS reported isolated totals of 10 inches in Cooke and Grayson counties. The rain fell only a few hours overnight Sunday and into Monday, which prompted flash flooding and the evacuation of hundreds of people. The flooding affected at least 300 homes in the Cooke County town of Gainesville, where emergency officials rescued many residents off their rooftops. At least 20 homes were affected by the flooding in the Grayson County city of Sherman. In Tarrant County, Haltom City and Keller saw severe flood damage that destroyed 13 homes and affected another 88. Flooding destroyed five homes and damaged another 20 in Lampasas County. Gov. Rich Perry declared four counties - Grayson, Cooke, Lampasas and Tarrant - as disaster areas due to flooding, tornadoes and severe storms. Faith-based disaster relief organizations in the four counties were assisting with feeding, cleanup and damage assessments. Texas Baptist Men and The Salvation Army were feeding families while Adventist Community Services was preparing to deploy. The Salvation Army also deployed a pastoral crisis counseling team. The United Methodist Committee on Relief sent flood buckets to the local annual conference and reported that some local conference representatives will assist with damage assessments. Whaley United Methodist Church in Gainesville was serving as a shelter.

**Gregory County (SD) Added To Presidential Disaster Declaration** (FEMA, 6/18)

FEMA and the State of South Dakota announced today that Gregory County is now eligible for disaster Public Assistance the President's May 22, major declaration for counties affected by the May 4-5 storms, floods and tornadoes. Gregory County now joins 22 other South Dakota counties eligible for Public Assistance. Counties included in the public assistance disaster declaration are: Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brown, Brule, Buffalo, Clark, Day, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jackson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Marshall, McCook, Miner, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, Tripp and Yankton. Portions of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Crow Creek Indian Reservation, and the Sisseton Wahpeton Indian Oyate that lie within the designated counties are also eligible for Public Assistance.

**Greensburg Donation Dilemma** (Disaster News Network, 6/13)

Residents in Greensburg may have lost everything when a powerful tornado flattened almost their entire farming town. But thanks to the generosity of others, among the things they won't have need for anytime soon are toothbrushes and dressy shoes. "One group donated more than 100,000 toothbrushes for distribution to the tornado victims," reported Sharon Watson, spokeswoman for the Kansas Adjutant General's Office. "While everyone certainly needs toothbrushes and appreciates this person's efforts, since there are only about 1,400 people in that town, there are going to be a lot left over." While disasters of any kind can bring out the best in people, they sometimes can also bring out the worst donations. The sometimes overwhelming onslaught of unwanted or unusable items has been termed by many as the "second disaster."

**President Declares Major Disaster for Missouri** (FEMA, 6/12)

FEMA today announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for the state of Missouri to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding during the period of May 5-18, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the assistance was authorized under a major disaster declaration issued for the state by President Bush. The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Carroll, Chariton, Clay, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Holt, Jackson, Lafayette, Livingston, Morgan, Nodaway, Osage, and Platte counties. The assistance, to be coordinated by FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the SBA also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. 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 in Andrew, Atchison, Bates, Carroll, Cass, Chariton, Daviess, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Howard, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, Ray, Saline, and Worth counties. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide. Paulison named Lee H. Rosenberg as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Rosenberg said damage surveys have been scheduled and more counties and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are completed.

**PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

**UK Predicts Fewer Hurricanes in 2007** (Disaster News Network, 6/21)

British forecasters at the Met Office are predicting a 2007 Atlantic hurricane season less active than that predicted by other forecasters. The prediction, issued 19 days after the start of the hurricane season on June 1, said there would be 10 tropical storms between July and the end of the season on November 30. It said there was a 70 percent chance that seven to 13 tropical storms would occur. "This represents below-normal activity relative to the 1990-2005 long-term average of 12.4," the office said. There have already been two named storms this season, Andrea and Barry. Unlike their American counterparts, the British forecasters did not predict how many of the tropical storms would develop into hurricanes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes. Forecasters at Colorado State University called for 17 named storms, nine of them hurricanes.

**U Minnesota students build on idea for a helpful box** (MN Star Tribune, 6/16)

It looks like a shipping container. It is a shipping container. But open the doors, roll out the wood floor, tip up the solar panels, arrange the tent fabric on the roof to catch rainwater, and, presto, like a magician's box, it becomes instant infrastructure. Dubbed the Clean Hub, the 8-by-8-by-20-foot structure provides a compost toilet, electrical power and filtered water. Sixteen University of Minnesota architecture students designed and built the prototype after researching the essential needs of a disaster area or refugee

camp. The Clean Hub will be shipped to New Orleans where it will serve as a shed and sanitary facilities at a garden where they are raising African-American foods in the city's flood-devastated Ninth Ward. It will arrive June 21. John Dwyer and Tom Wesbrook of the Minneapolis firm Shelter Architecture developed the Clean Hub concept and co-taught the class, which went to New Orleans over spring break to help with rebuilding. Their hands-on approach is inspired by the work of Architecture for Humanity, a nonprofit that has harnessed the volunteer design work of architects to the world's most challenging problems.

**Emergency Alert Capability Expanded** (Government Computer News, 6/12)

AtHoc has released an extension to the company's alert notification system to enable federal, state and local emergency management officials to send Emergency Alert System messages to the public more rapidly and efficiently. IWSAlerts, AtHoc's Web-based alert management system, now supports the Common Alerting Protocol, allowing emergency responders to send EAS messages over the Internet to broadcasters, according to company officials. The Federal Communications Commission announced May 31 that all EAS participants must support CAP to ensure alerts can be transmitted rapidly and efficiently to the public in a variety of formats — including text, audio and video — via broadcast, cable, satellite and other communications networks. EAS was launched in 1994 as a replacement for the Emergency Broadcast System. It is administered by FCC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service. State and local officials develop, implement and maintain the EAS infrastructure locally. EAS allows radio and TV stations to send emergency information to the public. The AtHoc IWSAlerts EAS Activation Module includes components that enable CAP-compliance for emergency management agencies and participating broadcasters, company officials said. AtHoc users will be able to trigger EAS systems by transmitting a CAP message that would be received by the broadcaster's CAP-enabled equipment. Using IWSAlerts, emergency managers can trigger alerts to a broad range of IP-based communications channels such as desktop computers, mobile phone text messaging and short message services, telephony, sirens, public address systems and paging systems.

**Only 7% of Americans 'Red Cross Ready' for Disaster** (Gov't Technology, 6/12)

According to an April 2007 poll conducted by the American Red Cross and Harris Interactive, only 7% of the population has taken what the Red Cross considers the three steps necessary to prepare for a disaster or emergency: get a kit, make a plan, and be informed. With June as the first month of hurricane season, the Red Cross encourages people to take its new, free online tutorial (<http://www.redcross.org/BeRedCrossReady>). The tutorial shows visitors how to complete each of the three steps. Harris Interactive conducted the online survey of more than 2,500 respondents during April 10-16, 2007. Results demonstrated that:

- 90 percent of Americans who have a disaster kit feel prepared. Yet, only 28 percent actually have a kit.
- 60 percent of American households own a pet, yet only 37 percent have a plan for their pets during a disaster.
- 69 percent of Americans living in hurricane-prone states don't have a disaster supplies kit, and 60 percent don't have an evacuation plan.

- 64 percent of Americans have no evacuation plan, even though 27 percent have had to leave home for at least one night because of a disaster or other emergency.

## **GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

### **New Orleans deemed safer but not secure** (Baltimore Sun, 6/21)

The federal government's verdict on the future of New Orleans is in: The city is much safer than before Hurricane Katrina but faces a 1-in-100 chance each year of significant flooding. Since Hurricane Katrina struck nearly two years ago, killing 1,293 and causing an estimated \$100 billion in damage, the Army Corps of Engineers has overseen a vast construction program to reinforce levees, repair damage and upgrade pumping stations. The effort has improved the city's prospects significantly but has not eliminated the huge risks. A computer analysis - the final part of the Corps' investigation into the levee failures during Katrina - found that residents in many sections of the city faced the likelihood of flooding as deep as 8 feet one year out of every 100. That means that homeowners would have to expect that during the course of a 30-year mortgage, they have a greater than 25 percent chance of enduring a serious flood if their home is in an area of the city below sea level and vulnerable to hurricane surges.

### **TX Counties Still in Need from Rita** (Disaster News Network, 6/18)

Long-term recovery organizations in four east TX counties are handling more than 1,500 cases of people still in need from Hurricane Rita in 2005. The organizations are working in Jasper, Newton, Polk and Tyler counties. When one long-term recovery organization covering Jasper and Newton counties disbanded due to lack of funds, its remaining 500 or so cases went to the Deep East Texas Council of Governments. That added to the caseload the council already had from the two counties. "We've got 1,500 from just those two counties alone," said Walter Diggles, the council's executive director. Diggles estimated that many of those cases may be people just looking for a handout, but said a good amount remain from people who were in serious need. The Tyler County Long Term Recovery Committee has some 200 cases remaining from Rita, and committee director Crisp Williams said he was worried about securing funding for those still in need.