

## **Disaster News Update – March 31 to April 6, 2007**

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

- **Chemical Accident:** Pennsylvania
- **Drought:** California, Arizona, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi
- **Fire:** Missouri, Kentucky, Florida
- **Severe Winter Weather:** Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Michigan, New York
- **Structure Fire:** California

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

- [New Mexico](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (4/2)
- [Iowa](#): snow (Emergency Declaration – 3/30)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Winter Storms (3/14)
- [California](#): Severe Freeze (3/13)
- [Indiana](#): Snow (Emergency Declaration - 3/13)
- [Alabama](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (3/3)
- [Georgia](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (3/3)
- Fire Declarations: [Florida \(3/26\)](#), [California \(3/11\)](#)

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS**

#### **Internet Publication Tells How to Help in Disaster** (Baltimore Sun, 4/4)

When disaster strikes -- a hurricane, wildfire, tornado or flood -- well-meaning individuals often want to do help but don't know how. Should they send clothes? Money? Food? Should they just show up, hammer in hand, willing to work? Disaster News Network, a nonprofit Internet publication based in Columbia, has the answers. DNN provides detailed information about disaster recovery efforts, mostly in the United States, with information about what is needed and how people can help. The site also posts about 10 original articles and photos each week of recent disasters and relief efforts. James Skillington, executive director of Village Life Co., which owns DNN, said the network's focus is on disaster recovery efforts from the faith-based community.

#### **Youths skip the beach but still make a splash** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/1)

Several groups of students from church groups or universities in Alabama, Tennessee and Ohio recently gave up their annual spring break to help out in Abita Springs. They joined with a host of town employees, firefighters from the Abita/Waldheim Fire Department and other local residents to assist in phase one of the Tourist Park cleanup and renovations. The work began on March 12 and continued throughout the week, said Greg Lemons, a member of the Town Council and project coordinator. The volunteer students included members of various Disciples of Christ Christian Churches in Alabama, the First Christian Church of Knoxville, Tenn., as well as students from Lambeth University in Jackson, Tenn., and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. The work in

Abita Springs was organized through local resident Betty Blancher, north shore disaster volunteer coordinator for Volunteers of America of Greater New Orleans.

**Relief volunteers buoy Bayou Liberty** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/1)

The partial reopening of Bayou Liberty Civic Center will be celebrated Saturday with the annual Easter egg hunt. The ball field was recently cleaned by a small army of volunteers who came to Bayou Liberty and transformed the Civic Center, allowing the more than 50-year-old community organization to resume its service to the community. With no flood insurance and little help to rebuild, the help was nothing short of a miracle. This is a partial reopening because the Civic Center is still in need of appliances, tables, chairs and kitchen equipment before it will be fully functioning. Leading the cleanup was an organization that was founded after the 1993 Mississippi River flood. Scott Harding of Michigan watched that disaster on television and remembers seeing a farming couple in Missouri trying to dig through the mud and debris. "Someone has to help these people," Harding said. He talked to some of his fellow employees at Amway and a group of them set off to help the flood victims. From this single action, Harding eventually founded the National Relief Network in 1996. It's now his full-time "job" as well as his life's vocation to help others.

## **COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS**

**Teen CERT Training Earns National Approval** (Fire Chief, 4/5)

The Teen CERT Train-the-Trainer course, developed by Eastern Michigan University under a competitive training grant from the DHS Office of Grants and Training, has been approved as an official course for national promotion. This approval allows state and local CERT Programs, as well as schools, to access the course and use DHS funding to support it. The training also prepares students for a role in their school's disaster response plan as additional trained resources in the event of a disaster. The train-the-trainer course covers instructional techniques for delivering the training to teens and steps to establish successful CERT training for high school or youth groups, including working with students, parents and school administrators. Participants also are given ideas and direction to maintain and sustain local teen CERT programs, such as partnering with local emergency management, and securing ongoing financial and political support.

**Agencies unite to form disaster response plan** (Lompoc Record (CA), 4/1)

January's freezing temperatures may be gone but their chilling effect is still being felt by many on the Central Coast whose jobs were lost when the mercury tumbled. This has left local nonprofit groups scrambling to keep up with the sharp increase in demand for services. As more residents sought help, various organizations came together to try to coordinate their efforts, and now those officials are looking to create a formal coalition to ensure that the next disaster has a more cohesive response. Santa Barbara County, the city of Santa Maria and area nonprofit groups are in the early stages of establishing a Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, or VOAD, a sort of disaster plan for social-service agencies, similar to the disaster plans local government's create to coordinate police, fire and other government services in the event of a crisis.

**PA Wants to Join Nationwide Volunteer Registry Effort** (The Sentinel, 4/4)

The state Health Department wants to know who would be willing to lend a hand in the event of a statewide emergency as it joins a nationwide effort to establish a registry of potential volunteers. The department on Tuesday unveiled the State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in Pennsylvania, or SERVPA, during a news conference on emergency preparedness. The online registry will help the state build a database of volunteers with a wide range of backgrounds — including doctors, nurses, contractors and law enforcement — who can be mobilized when disaster strikes, Health Secretary Dr. Calvin B. Johnson said. “If you have a skill or service to provide that may well be needed in the event of a disaster... we would love to have you be a part of it,” Johnson said. The system is intended primarily for the registration of health care professionals, but states have the option of broadening their volunteer bases, Wolfson said. At least 24 other states have established registries, including Florida, Ohio, Michigan and New Jersey, he said.

**City storm plan calls on volunteers to aid in evacuation** (N.O. Times Picayune, 3/31)

With as many as 25,000 residents expected to need help getting out of New Orleans in advance of a hurricane, city officials on Friday rolled out their most detailed evacuation plan since Katrina, along with a call to city employees to sign up for 400 positions required to put the plan into action. Under the "City Assisted Evacuation Plan," volunteers -- both ordinary residents and city workers -- would begin picking up elderly residents and those who lack transportation about 54 hours, or 2½ days, before tropical-storm-force winds are expected to reach the Louisiana coast. Volunteers would also be responsible for keeping track of where evacuees are sent and helping with pets. Depending on the storm's severity, the plan calls for Mayor Ray Nagin to enact a citywide mandatory evacuation 30 hours before winds whip up. That's far earlier than Nagin ordered residents to leave before Hurricane Katrina. The mayor has been widely criticized by members of Congress and others for waiting until the day before the landmark storm to issue a mandatory evacuation.

**Oregon group wants to help, learn** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 3/31)

More than 100 public and private civic leaders from Oregon, including its governor and the mayor of Portland, arrive today for four days in the Katrina flood zone, partly to see whether Oregon can provide more support on the ground or on Capitol Hill, the group's representatives said. Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Portland Mayor Tom Potter and others also will examine the grass-roots aid being provided by Mercy Corps, an international relief agency based in Portland, Kulongoski said. The trip is a public-private partnership spearheaded in large part by Sho Dozono, a Portland businessman. It extends a tradition begun after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, when Dozono and a smaller Oregon group flew to New York City to look for opportunities to help. This trip is much larger, organizers said. It includes top elected officials, as well as civic and charitable leaders from Portland. Oregon sent 2,000 National Guardsmen to New Orleans in the first weeks after the storm, Kulongoski said. Since then, Oregon volunteers have been among the tens of thousands working in New Orleans since Katrina. While this trip will involve some hands-on volunteer work arranged at a few stops, it is basically a reconnaissance by civic leaders to assess the recovery for themselves.

## **RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS**

### **NY Flood Families Get Mental Health Aid** (Disaster News Network, 4/5)

Mental health counselors in New York have helped more than 3,000 people affected by the flooding in Broome, Tioga and Delaware counties in the past year - and residents continue coming forward for help. "There's a lot of concern about spring flooding," said Boni Gross, director of Project Recovery. "People are very nervous about that." The Project Recovery program is designed to help residents cope with the emotional and mental challenges brought on by devastating flooding last summer and in November, Gross said. Hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed by both floods that ravaged communities big and small, including Binghamton, Endicott, Conklin and Deposit.

### **CO Frees Up \$1 Million in Disaster Aid** (Rocky Mountain News, 4/5)

Gov. Bill Ritter asked the SBA on Wednesday to declare a disaster emergency for victims of the deadly tornado in Holly and Prowers County. The governor is seeking a physical and economic injury disaster declaration so the SBA can provide low-interest loans to the victims of the tornado, which killed a 29-year-old woman and injured 11 others. Ritter also asked for an economic injury disaster declaration for the neighboring counties of Kiowa, Bent and Baca in southeastern Colorado, according to a letter sent by the governor to Alfred E. Judd, director of the SBA's Field Operations Center West. Authorities have documented 11 businesses that were damaged in the tornado, including five that sustained "major or greater damage." The governor signed an executive order Tuesday to free up to \$1 million in state money for tornado recovery efforts in Holly and Prowers County. The money will help cover costs for temporary housing, mental health services and repairs to the county's infrastructure.

### **IA Receives FEMA Disaster Assistance** (Guthrie Center Times, 4/5)

FEMA announced federal disaster aid has been made available for Iowa to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record snow and near record snow during the period of February 28 to March 2. Federal funding is available to the state and eligible local governments in 23 western Iowa counties including Adair, Audubon, Carroll, Cass, Greene and Guthrie. The assistance is available on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures that were undertaken to save lives and protect public health, safety and property over a continuous 48-hour period during or proximate to the incident period. FEMA works closely with state and local emergency managers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders.

### **Agencies Form in GA for Long Term Recovery** (Disaster News Network, 4/4)

Helping families restructure their lives so they can move forward is the focus in post-tornado Americus, disaster responders report. "People have shifted gears now that we're three to four weeks out," said Marlon Sims, director of the Sumter Christian Coalition. "People are wondering what their next move is and how they can rebuild. A lot of them haven't had the opportunity to think about restructuring their lives for the long-term." Sims also serves as vice chairman of the Sumter Disaster Recovery (SDR) long-term

recovery organization, a coalition of faith groups and agencies helping families in Sumter County recover from the devastating March 1 tornado.

**GA Storm Recovery Tops 6 Million** (WALB News, 4/4)

Statewide disaster recovery aid has now topped 6.58 million dollars. For the nine counties that locally include Baker, Dougherty, Mitchell, Sumter, Taylor, and Worth Counties, more than 1,700 households have registered for individual assistance. More than five million dollars in loans have been approved by the Small Business Administration. Twenty-two hundred people have visited the Disaster Recovery Centers in several counties. All of those disaster centers are now closed, but storm victims still have until May first to apply for federal and state assistance.

**CO Governor Declares Tornado Disaster** (KOAA, 4/2)

Governor Bill Ritter declared the Eastern Plains town of Holly a disaster area, Monday. The declaration allows the state to pursue federal money to help in the recovery effort. Ritter says the state will also review its grant money situation, to help provide financial support. Residents and officials in Holly came together, Monday night, to discuss the future. They held a town hall meeting, the first meeting since a tornado struck Holly last Wednesday night, killing one woman and destroying more than a hundred homes. In the past five days, a great deal of progress has been made. Most of the power has been restored. Some trees and homes are still being torn down. Red Cross workers went door to door to see if the people who have stayed in town need any help. And volunteers have been working around the clock to get the town back on its feet.

**President Declares Tornado Disaster for NM** (KRQE, 4/2)

President Bush has declared a major disaster because of tornado damage in New Mexico's Curry and Quay counties. That makes residents in the eastern New Mexico region eligible for federal funds. Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and programs to help individuals and business owners recover. The declaration also makes federal funding available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation statewide. Gov. Bill Richardson signed a request last Thursday, seeking a declaration for the two counties plus Roosevelt County. The request came after tornadoes destroyed dozens of homes and damaged hundreds more. One woman was killed.

**Hesperia fire prompts hundreds to evacuate** (Los Angeles Times, 4/1)

Firefighters from three counties battled a fast-moving fire Saturday in the high-desert town of Hesperia, a blaze that by nightfall had consumed 1,400 acres and prompted the evacuation of about 500 residents from more than 200 homes. Officials said the fire, about 80 miles northeast of Los Angeles, damaged the roof of one home and consumed an outbuilding. No injuries were reported. The cause was under investigation. The Las Flores fire began about 10:40 a.m. and remained quiet during the day, consuming 100 acres of juniper and creosote bushes. But the flames flared in the afternoon, fanned by gusty winds. By 3 p.m., the city of 82,000 was on heightened alert and mandatory evacuations were ordered, said City Manager Mike Podegracz.

**Holly, CO Receives Assistance** (Disaster News Network, 3/31)

The small town of Holly was receiving large amounts of help Saturday as it continued to recover from a tornado which heavily damaged the community. "People are pretty upbeat," reported Gary Renville, a volunteer from Denver who is helping to manage volunteers coming into town. "This is a close-knit community. It's a community of faith. It's neighbor helping neighbor. And when that's not enough, it's strangers driving in from two, three, four hours away saying, 'What can I do to help.' "I'm delightfully surprised that still happens today," he said. Renville said there was a strong faith-based response to the disaster, from local churches, the ministerial alliance in the town and from outside groups, such as Adventist Community Services and The Salvation Army, which were on the scene. Mennonite Disaster Response and Southern Baptists were scheduled to bring in large groups to help, he added.

**PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS**

**FEMA/Red Cross Claim They're Better Prepared** (Shreveport Times, 4/5)

Since Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross and FEMA had to admit their flaws and make numerous changes to be better prepared for major disasters, the heads of both agencies said Wednesday. FEMA, is still trying to overcome its image as an inept, uncaring agency, Director David Paulison said to reporters at the National Hurricane Conference. Restoring trust in the agency's ability to handle a disaster is "probably one of the most difficult things to do," Paulison said he has stockpiled supplies across the country in areas deemed to be at risk and has told state and local officials that FEMA will move in without being asked. "We will work more closely with states," especially Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi on developing improved evacuation and sheltering plans, he said, even though those are not federal responsibilities.

**Preparedness for Developmental Disabilities Workshop Held** (PR Web, 4/5)

More than 50 organizations from across Maryland participated in emergency preparedness training in four Maryland regions this month. These regional training workshops gave participants an opportunity to learn about disaster readiness for people with developmental disabilities and other special needs. As the next step, participants are invited to participate in one of four disaster readiness regional exercises, and a final regional functional exercise in June. The Emergency Preparedness Education, Training and Exercise Project is a joint effort of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DHMH's Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD). The project is an effort to improve the disaster readiness of DDA-licensed providers of services to individuals with disabilities, and the readiness of the individuals served.

**DHS preparedness chief resigns amid reorganization** (GovExec.Com, 4/4)

In December 2005, George Foresman became the first undersecretary for the DHS Preparedness Directorate. He will likely be its last. Foresman resigned Thursday, two days before the directorate officially disappears. The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act signed into law last October reorganized the department's

preparedness functions, eliminating the Preparedness Directorate and significantly diminishing Foresman's duties. The law -- intended by supporters to prevent future federal disaster response failures like those after Hurricane Katrina -- reconstituted FEMA, moving many of the Preparedness Directorate's activities under FEMA's umbrella and elevating FEMA's administrator to the undersecretary level.

**Hurricane Forecasters Predict Active 2007 Season** (Disaster News Network, 4/3)

The 2007 Atlantic hurricane season will see 17 named storms, nine of which will become hurricanes, forecasters at Colorado State University predicted Tuesday. Five of the nine hurricanes will be Category 3 or above, the team said. CSU researchers announce their predictions several times each year. Their latest prediction was an increase over the 2007 season forecast released in December. "We are calling for a very active hurricane season this year, but not as active as the 2004 or 2005 seasons," said Phil Klotzbach of the CSU team in a news release. "Based on our latest forecast, the probability of a major hurricane making landfall along the U.S. coastline is 74 percent, compared with the last-century average of 52 percent." Klotzbach said the rapid dissipation of El Nino weather patterns this winter caused the increase in the prediction. "We do not think (El Nino is) going to be an inhibiting factor this year," he said. "Also, we have warm Atlantic sea surface temperatures this year, which we've seen just about every year since 1995."

**For Some, Still No Safe Place in a Storm** (St. Petersburg Times, 4/3)

The term "retarded" has given way in our society to "developmentally disabled." But by any name, Florida has a problem. Many of the most severely disabled among us still have no safe place to go in a hurricane. Neither our shelters for the general population nor special shelters for medical or other needs can handle the unique demands. "We're talking about people who sometimes throw chairs," explains Linda Klehammer, chief development officer for PARC, founded in 1953 as the Pinellas Association for Retarded Children. "We're talking about people who need diaper changes. We have to have people to take care of them." Klehammer said there are 387,000 statewide who fit the category of developmentally disabled, and of those, about 90,000 severely so.

**U.S. cities could flood by 2080** (Associated Press, 4/1)

More than two-thirds of the world's large cities are in areas vulnerable to global warming and rising sea levels, and millions of people are at risk of being swamped by flooding and intense storms, according to a new study. In all, 634 million people live in the threatened coastal areas worldwide -- defined as those lying at less than 33 feet above sea level -- and the number is growing, said the study published last week in the journal Environment and Urbanization. More than 180 countries have populations in low-elevation coastal zones, and about 70 percent of those have urban areas of more than 5 million people that are under threat. Among them: Tokyo; New York; Mumbai, India; Shanghai, China; Jakarta, Indonesia; and Dhaka, Bangladesh. The peer-reviewed scientific study said it is the first to identify the world's low-lying coastal areas vulnerable to global warming and rising sea levels. It said 75 percent of all people living in vulnerable areas are in Asia, with poorer nations most at risk.

**Delaware Plans for Pets in Emergencies** (Delaware Online, 3/31)

Many people who stayed home with pets died when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005. The storm, which killed an unknown number of animals, caused emergency organizations and animal groups nationwide to re-examine pet disaster practices.

Delaware is no exception. State officials are fine-tuning a blueprint released in February that spells out how household and farm pets would be dealt with during a disaster. The goal: reduce the spread of disease, protect the food supply and prevent people from risking their lives to save their animals.

Source: Delaware Online, 3/31/2007.

**GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS**

**Gutting law getting few results** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/6)

A year after the New Orleans City Council passed a law requiring owners to clean, gut and board up flood-damaged buildings, the city's program to get owners to comply with the law is finding it hard to make a dent in the problem. For some council members, what they see as the program's lack of success is as frustrating as the slow pace of the state's Road Home program of financial assistance to homeowners. Some community activists, however, think the gutting program is moving too swiftly. Officials of Mayor Ray Nagin's administration gave the council a report Thursday on the progress of what the city has christened the Good Neighbor Program. Of nearly 11,000 properties identified by city inspectors as violating the gutting law and other laws requiring owners to maintain buildings and lots in good condition, the council was told, only 175 have made it all the way through the city's complicated administrative review procedures, meaning they can be expropriated and either gutted or torn down by the city.

**N.O. takes a beating in census** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/5)

In a finding not likely to surprise Hurricane Katrina victims, a U.S. Census Bureau report made public today shows the New Orleans area suffered the greatest population loss among 361 metropolitan regions between 2000 and 2006 -- while Atlanta, Dallas and Houston, destinations for many displaced New Orleanians, ranked first, second and third in gains. The seven-parish New Orleans area lost 292,000 people, falling from about 1.3 million to 1 million, according to the new analysis. As a result, the New Orleans area's ranking among the 361 metro areas slid from 38th to 50th. The figures cover the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany. The Gulfport-Biloxi area of Mississippi, population 227,904 in 2006, had the next greatest decline, also attributable to Katrina, at 7 percent, a loss of 18,286 people.

**St. Bernard adopts federal elevation rules** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/4)

The St. Bernard Parish Council on Tuesday adopted the federal government's flood advisories, which will generally require new construction to be raised at least 3 feet. But in an effort to give rebuilding residents more time to begin construction before the new elevations kick in, the council said the advisories would not take effect in the parish until 5 p.m. on June 4. That means anyone who secures a building permit before that date would not be required to build at the higher, and more expensive, elevations. FEMA

released the new elevations last spring, but the council had delayed adopting them to give residents more time to begin rebuilding at the current elevations, which do not require the homes to be raised. The FEMA advisories require new homes and existing property with severe damage to be raised at least to 3 feet above grade or to the base flood elevation, whichever is higher. The new rules might affect up to 6,500 homes.

**New Orleans Struggles to Plan for Evacuation** (Washington Post, 4/4)

With hurricane season less than two months away and memories of Katrina less than two years old, city leaders are still trying to sort out how they will evacuate residents this year if another storm approaches. Tourism leaders oppose using the convention center as a staging ground to evacuate the city's neediest, fearing it would hurt the travel economy by reviving images of the misery it harbored after Katrina hit Aug. 29, 2005. Their resistance poses a potentially serious setback for emergency planners.

**'Uneven' Treatment in Road Home Program** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 4/3)

A state audit has found the counselors at Road Home housing centers often don't have formal procedures and give out inconsistent information when they meet with homeowners who have applied for the hurricane recovery aid. The office of Legislative Auditor Steve J. Theriot reviewed operations at six of the Road Home's 12 permanent housing assistance centers, where applicants come to hold initial, and sometimes follow-up, interviews. The auditors observed interviews in New Orleans, Metairie, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, and St. Bernard and Vermilion parishes. In as many as a third of those sessions, Road Home staff failed to address critical details about eligibility, program options or requirements of the covenant applicants would be signing if they planned to rebuild, the audit report said.

**New Orleans has a new plan to build on higher ground** (Washington Post, 4/1)

After months of false starts and a raft of incoherent plans, New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin (D) announced a redevelopment plan last week that might actually stand a chance of becoming reality. Rather than pursue a blanket approach to reviving the city devastated by Hurricane Katrina, the proposal targets 17 areas for direct investment that Mr. Nagin and others hope will spur private development. There's one hitch: the federal government. The \$1.1 billion plan relies on bonding and state grants, but the biggest share of the financing depends on FEMA waiving a requirement that local jurisdictions in Louisiana supply 10 percent of the funds for infrastructure projects financed by FEMA. That would have the effect of freeing up \$324 million that Mr. Nagin and his renowned recovery chief, Ed Blakely, could leverage to attract private dollars to the Crescent City. Not only that, the waiver would free New Orleans from the burdensome red tape required for every project that uses FEMA money.

**Gulf Hits Snag in Rebuilding Public Works** (New York Times, 3/31)

None of St. Bernard Parish's 10 fire houses have been rebuilt, even though local officials estimate that 26,000 people have returned to the area, just east of New Orleans. In fact, across southern Louisiana and Mississippi, many school buildings remain closed, public water systems leak, roads crumble and libraries mold. Local governments cannot afford to fix them, and billions of dollars in recovery assistance promised by the federal

government have only started to trickle to the region. Local and state government officials have blamed a federal law for the failure to invest in these public works. They associate the problem with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, the federal law that finances the rebuilding of local government infrastructure. It imposes requirements for receiving money that many towns and parishes here say they cannot meet.

**Local job market gets stronger** (New Orleans Times Picayune, 3/31)

The local labor market strengthened in February when both the total number of jobs available and the total number of people working posted gains. According to figures released Friday by the Louisiana Department of Labor, the total number of nonfarm jobs available in the seven-parish metro area climbed to 496,200 in February, up from 495,900 in January and 456,300 in February of 2006. The total number of people employed climbed to 473,210 in February, up from 471,938 in January and 447,975 in February of 2006. "This is part of hurricane recovery. Plus, it's also part of a seasonal pattern in that one reason why employment increased over the month was because of employment increasing at the colleges and universities as the new semester started," said labor market specialist Patty Lopez. The educational and health services sector significantly increased the number of jobs it offers. The number of local jobs in that sector climbed to 59,800 in February, up from 59,100 in January and 52,900 in February of 2006. The transportation, financial and government sectors also posted gains over the year and the month.

**New Orleans To Concentrate Rebuilding Efforts in 17 Areas** (New York Times, 3/29)

New Orleans unveiled its latest redevelopment plan Thursday, choosing 17 zones where the city has decided to concentrate resources in order to stimulate investment and renewal. The 17 development zones, each about a half-mile in diameter, are scattered throughout New Orleans. They vary from a devastated shopping plaza in the eastern section of the city, to blocks in the ruined Lower Ninth Ward and to areas not hard-hit by Hurricane Katrina but still in need of renewal, as officials put it, including the old St. Roch Market in the Bywater area. The plan is at least the fourth such effort since the storm, and at about \$1.1 billion, notably more modest than its predecessors.

**[View Recovery Map](#)**