

Disaster News Update – October 8 to 14, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** North Carolina, Georgia, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, New York, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee
- **Fire:** Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Florida
- **HazMat:** Kansas (Freight Car Leak)
- **Heavy rain / Flooding:** New York, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Iowa,
- **Crime:** Ohio (School Shooting)
- **Tornado:** Oklahoma, Florida,

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Texas](#): Tropical Storm Erin (10/2)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/25)
- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/21)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/14)
- Fire Declarations: [Washington \(9/21\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Volunteers Arrive Early and Stay Late after Flood Recovery (FEMA, 10/12)

From the beginning of a disaster to the long term recovery efforts, volunteers band together to assist communities. When the severe storms and flooding in August washed out roads and flooded numerous homes and businesses, volunteer agencies stepped up to respond immediately. Since the flooding, organizations such as the American Red Cross, Lutheran Social Services, AmeriCorps, United Methodists, the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and United Way have been providing a variety of needs such as meals, emergency housing, and assistance with cleaning and repairing homes. Some of the efforts to date include:

- The American Red Cross provided shelters and meals. Following their initial response, volunteers set up reception sites where they provided hot meals and offered informational pamphlets, water, food and cleanup kits.
- Catholic Charities have helped more than 250 individuals and families. They distributed food and gas cards and distributed 57 pairs of rubber boots in Gays Mills.
- The Salvation Army provided 9,000 meals and 700 flood cleanup kits.
- United Way brought flood buckets, which contained mops, disinfectant, gloves and sponges to areas in need.
- AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps members assisted with removing water and mud from flooded homes.

Red Cross is offering weeklong Safety School (Deseret Morning News, 10/9)

The Mountain Valley Chapter, American Red Cross, will offer a Safety School as part of the 2007 Mountain Valley Health & Safety Conference the week of Oct 15. Courses include:

- The 60-hour emergency responder course, meeting the guidelines for a first responder and both state and federal requirements for guides and outfitters on public lands.
- Learn the risks of a flu pandemic and what steps you can take to protect yourself, family or co-workers. This is a free presentation.
- For health-care providers and social workers, both the HIV starter facts class and the HIV instructors/presenters course will be offered. Discover the facts about HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted and how to protect yourself from infection. You can also be certified to teach prevention skills to at-risk groups.

For current Red Cross instructors who wish to take their certification to the next level, the Preparedness Training System will be offered.

Lockton Volunteers to Help Rebuild Greensburg, KS (Business Wire, 10/9)

Five months following the devastation caused by an EF5 tornado that destroyed 95 percent of Greensburg, Kan., Lockton Companies is doing its part to help clean up and rebuild a community. On Thursday, October 11 at noon, 80 Lockton Associates will head to Greensburg to provide both physical labor, as well as emotional support. They will work on new houses currently under construction, repair houses that survived the tornado and continue to clean up debris on Friday and Saturday, from 9 to 5 p.m. Lockton Associates will also have a chance to meet local residents at a dinner Thursday evening and then cheer on the Greensburg Rangers High School football team on Friday night. Lockton is working with the South Central Tornado Recovery Organization (SCTRO) to coordinate efforts. According to SCTRO, Lockton is the first company to organize a volunteer effort of this magnitude. To date, volunteers have been from church groups and relief organizations. In addition to the volunteer efforts, Lockton Kansas City and Lockton Houston have raised funds to benefit the community. "WE LIVE SERVICE!"[®] is a philosophy we apply not only to our clients, but our community," said Mark Henderson, Lockton COO. "We feel it is important not only to send funds but also our most valuable asset, our Associates, to assist with the rebuilding efforts of Greensburg." Area companies, such as Consentino's Price Chopper, Chipotle Mexican Grill, U-Haul and Pro-Corp Images have also joined Lockton's efforts by donating supplies to help reduce project expenses.

ARC to Receive Training on Disabilities and Disasters (PR Newswire, 10/8)

The World Institute on Disability and the American Red Cross will announce the creation of an innovative national training, awareness and action program to help volunteers better serve people with disabilities during disasters. The national training program is funded through a \$300,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation. The American Red Cross constantly innovates and new learning to improve services, including those to vulnerable populations: people with disabilities, the children and low-income communities. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross saw a need to improve outreach and response to vulnerable populations. The World Institute on Disability, which

received a \$300,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to create the training program, will develop a system that will train first responders to better serve the needs of people with disabilities, elevate awareness of the need and create a pilot program. After the pilot program is completed, training will be done in 10 regions throughout the country, including the San Francisco Bay Area.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Local students learn about fire & rescue (Berkshire Eagle, 10/13)

A series of schoolwide fire drills and presentations about emergency response professions conducted this week by McGrath and company aimed to drum up interest in the junior firefighters' program. High school students ages 15 to 18 are eligible for the program. The "team building" obstacle course, complete with simulated smoke, highlighted Fire Prevention Week and was one of the first products of the newly established Fire, Life and Medical Emergency -- or FLAME -- program. FLAME is funded by a portion of the DHS's \$665,962 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant, which was awarded to Cheshire and Savoy earlier this year. The SAFER grant and FLAME will support programs throughout the year, such as the upcoming First Responder emergency medical technician courses offered at Hoosac in the spring. It is earmarked exclusively for recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The grant awarded to Cheshire and Savoy is the largest of four SAFER grants given to Massachusetts stations this year. McGrath said that, besides recruiting young volunteers, the group of 40 firefighters in the two towns hope to entice 24 to 30 new members during the four-year span of the grant.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

FEMA updates figures on SE Minn. flood recovery (Pioneer Press, 10/12)

Just over \$43 million in federal recovery funds has been made available to flood victims in southeastern Minnesota in the seven weeks since a presidential disaster was declared, according to federal officials. FEMA said Winona County continues to be the county leading the way in federal assistance. The county has received more than \$6.6 million. Fillmore County has received almost \$6.3 million, Olmsted County has received just over \$1.9 million and Houston County has been given \$1.8 million. FEMA said that as of Wednesday, 4,800 people in the seven-county area had registered for individual assistance and \$1.5 million in assistance for housing and other needs had been distributed. Business and economic injury loans totaling \$25.5 million have also been approved.

Kansas Flood Recovery Advances (Disaster News Network, 10/11)

Recovery from summer flooding in Miami County, Kan., is moving forward quickly thanks to widespread support from the public. "It's been pretty remarkable," said Rob Roberts, local director of The Salvation Army in Miami and Linn counties. "We've got a lot of good people, great teamwork and great resources." Roberts said Miami County

Disaster Assistance (MCDA) averages almost 300 repair and rebuild volunteers every weekend. Flooding in July damaged more than 425 properties in the county, the majority of them in the city of Osawatomie. Nearly 50 homes and buildings had to be torn down. MCDA did a case management assessment on 400 of the affected residents, Roberts said, and then helped 100 homeowners reoccupy their houses. It also helped more than 100 affected renters secure new rental spaces in the area. The 28 homes that still require work have volunteers swarming them every weekend to repair and rebuild the residences, said Roberts, a member of MCDA.

Disaster Teams Canvass TX Counties Affected by Erin (Media Newswire, 10/10)

Community Relations (CR) teams made up of representatives from the Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are busy reaching out to Texans affected by Tropical Storm Erin, August 14-20. CR teams are going door-to-door, canvassing neighborhoods and spreading the word that disaster aid is available to residents of Bexar, Harris, Jones, Kendall, Medina and Taylor Counties. They deliver vital disaster recovery information to storm victims as well as coordinate with county emergency managers and other local officials. CR officers are the communication lifelines for valuable disaster recovery information for residents, local governments, businesses, religious organizations and volunteer agencies and they provide valuable information on the location of the nearest Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). Residents and business owners with Tropical Storm Erin related damages and losses are encouraged to register with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or (TTY 1-800-462-7585) for the speech- and hearing-impaired. Toll-free registration lines are open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. local time, seven days a week. Residents and business owners may register online at www.fema.gov. The registration deadline is December 3, 2007. GDEM and FEMA also work closely with community-based organizations, community leaders and public officials to assist Texas in recovery efforts. FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Dep't of Labor announces \$1.2M for WI Flood Recovery (Labor Press Release, 10/9)

The U.S. Department of Labor today announced a \$1,220,000 grant, with \$420,000 released initially, to the state of Wisconsin to help create temporary jobs to aid cleanup and recovery efforts resulting from recent flooding in central and western parts of the state. "This \$1.2 million grant will provide dislocated workers with temporary jobs helping Wisconsin communities affected by the recent flooding," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. On September 6, the FEMA declared the Wisconsin counties of Crawford, La Crosse, Richland, Sauk and Vernon eligible for FEMA's Public Assistance program. The Labor Department grant, awarded to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, will provide temporary jobs to workers affected by the recent flooding, other dislocated workers and the long-term unemployed. Projects targeted for the temporary jobs will include those related to cleanup, restoration and other humanitarian efforts in affected areas. National Emergency Grants are part of the secretary of labor's discretionary fund and are awarded based on a state's ability to meet specific guidelines.

Tahoe Blaze Destroys Over 250 Homes (Disaster News Network, 10/8)

Residents who lost their homes when a wildfire swept through the area are struggling to not only to rebuild their residences but also their lives. "Most people are in worse emotional shape now than they were a week after the fire," said Betty "B" Gorman, president and chief executive officer of the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. "I think the reality of what has happened to their lives has really hit home." "Right now, the mental health aspect I think is the greatest need," agreed Rex McQuillen, pastor of the Sierra Community Church. The Angora wildfire, which erupted June 24 and burned for more than a week before being fully contained, destroyed 254 homes in the North Upper Truckee and Tahoe Mountain residential areas near the popular and pricey resort community. The fire burned 3,072 acres before it was 100 percent contained on July 2. Since then, donations of money and material goods have poured into the community to help the residents who live and work there permanently, as opposed to the numerous second-home owners and vacationers. A long-term recovery committee was recently formed and will employ a full-time staff person to do case management and assess unmet needs.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Wichita Exercise to test skills of emergency personnel (Wichita Eagle, 10/14)

A taste of terrorism is coming to Wichita. Explosions, fire and confusion will rattle downtown Friday morning as a three-day disaster simulation starts. The simulation, sponsored by the University of Kansas Medical Center and the South Central Kansas Homeland Security Council, is intended to help emergency service and medical personnel learn how to respond and treat mass casualties in a disaster -- whether it's caused by terrorists or nature. As the simulation unfolds, officials say, first responders and emergency service workers will discover that the destruction wasn't caused by Mother Nature. Training began Saturday at the Sedgwick County Emergency Operations Center just south of Main and Murdock, drawing more than 50 dispatchers and emergency management officials from around the region -- plus government officials from Armenia. They're being taught how to set up and run an emergency operations center at the site of a disaster, said John Holgerson, president of Rescue Training Associates, a Florida-based company that has assisted after Sept. 11, the Oklahoma City bombing and Hurricane Katrina. The simulation that begins at 9 a.m. Friday will continue until about noon Oct. 21.

FEMA authoring response plans for catastrophes in 4 states (Associated Press, 10/12)

FEMA is quietly drawing up plans for a handful of disasters: devastating earthquakes beneath San Francisco and St. Louis and catastrophic storms in South Florida and Hawaii, FEMA's chief said Thursday. In a departure from its traditional expectation that states develop such responses, the agency is forming "base plans" for responding to specific calamities, FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison said in an interview Thursday with The Associated Press. FEMA officials expect to finish plans for a massive Bay Area quake by the end of the year and are at work on another response blueprint for

a large quake on the New Madrid fault, which runs from southern Illinois to northeastern Arkansas and lurks beneath St. Louis, Paulison said. FEMA also is preparing for a Category 5 hurricane in the Miami area and has nearly completed response guidelines for a failure of the 143-mile dike around Lake Okeechobee, northwest of Miami, he said. About 45,000 people live in flood-prone areas around the lake. Also, the agency recently began assembling response plans for a catastrophic hurricane in Hawaii, Paulison said. Last year, Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer of California expressed dismay that the federal government did not have a plan to respond to a catastrophic earthquake in this state. In a March 2006 AP interview, Paulison's boss, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, said their complaints were "unwarranted."

\$600K Pledged for LA Pet Shelter (SFGate.Com, 10/10)

An animal rights group has pledged \$600,000 to build an emergency animal shelter at a prison in case of future evacuation or natural disaster. The grant announced Monday by the Humane Society of the United States will create space for up to 500 animals on the grounds of the Dixon state prison. Trained inmates will tend to the pets. "This is a win-win situation for everyone involved," said Warden James LeBlanc. "In addition to the benefit for the animals, the inmates have a long-term opportunity to incorporate animal care and handling into their rehabilitation regimens." In Hurricane Katrina, more than 10,000 animals had to be rescued after evacuations, either because they were left behind or because owners were not allowed to take them on buses.

Bills would reduce red tape in emergency (UPI, 10/9)

Bills being considered by some 20 U.S. state legislatures would remove legal hurdles that kept medical volunteers from helping victims of Hurricane Katrina. The legislation, already approved in Colorado, Kentucky and Tennessee, would let doctors, nurses and other medical volunteers receive quick authorization so they can help in states where they aren't licensed, USA Today reported Tuesday. Hundreds of medical volunteers were prevented from entering Louisiana in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina flattened hospitals and left residents desperate for help, USA Today reported. Dr. Preston Rich, chief of trauma surgery at the University of North Carolina Hospitals, headed for New Orleans in a 35-car convoy of healthcare workers who were stopped at the Louisiana state line. "It was just a brick wall" of bureaucracy, Rich told USA Today. "It was chaos."

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

SC inspectors speed Katrina aid (The Sun News, 10/12)

Three Georgetown County building inspectors will leave Sunday to help the city of Moss Point, Miss., an area still in the process of rebuilding after 2005's Hurricane Katrina. This is part of a partnership with the International City/County Management Association's Gulf Coast Peer Professionals Program. In May, Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour announced a \$6,572,000 grant award for Moss Point for the reconstruction of its Main Street, new fire station, riverwalk north and east, and marina improvements. Georgetown County's three building inspectors will spend five days in Moss Point; they are only part of the first wave of assistance from Georgetown County. On Oct. 22, six heavy

equipment operators will follow, and on Oct. 28 four members of the county's administrative staff will provide some leadership training and grant administrative support, said Ray Funnys, County Public Services director. All travel accommodations including airfare, hotel and meals are provided through the ICMA and the Fannie Mae Corp.

New Orleans Scales Back Rebuilding Plan (CNN.Com, 10/12)

After struggling for months to come up with \$1.1 billion for stage one of New Orleans' hurricane rebuilding plan, city officials faced with growing public frustration intend to move ahead with a drastically scaled-back first step of \$216 million. The blueprint being released Friday by city Recovery Director Ed Blakely is far more modest than the one he issued in March. But he said it will at least get the rebuilding started and give the public desperately needed signs of progress -- which, in turn, will encourage private investment in New Orleans. "Plans help you make progress," Blakely said. The plan -- the general outlines of which were approved by the City Council earlier this year -- is not the radical remaking of the city urged by some urban planners who wanted to see a New Orleans with a much smaller footprint, and with people moved out of flood-prone areas. Instead, it largely embraces Mayor Ray Nagin's settle-where-you-will philosophy, while also endorsing the removal of blight and the creation of parks, affordable apartments and vibrant communities. Under the plan, work would begin in the next few years on green space, health clinics, community centers, housing and libraries. Shopping centers would be redeveloped and streetscapes and storefronts spruced up. Among other things, Blakely also eventually wants to see the mostly poor, mostly black Lower 9th Ward become an Afro-Cuban version of the French Quarter, with music and art, architecturally diverse homes and restaurants.

FEMA village to close (The Advocate, 10/12)

Sometime today, muscle pull and all, Stephanie Enis will take the last box out of her Renaissance Village trailer in a last-minute effort not to meet that anniversary. Friday will mark two years since Enis was given keys to a FEMA trailer after she spent almost two months after Hurricane Katrina in a shelter not far away. The New Orleans evacuee plans to spend the anniversary in a Heritage Court apartment - complete with two bedrooms, a full kitchen and new carpet - just down the road from FEMA village. And, if Enis' account is any indication, other evacuees are following her lead. Enis, who has handed out more than 20 apartment applications, said most village residents are ready to go elsewhere. More than two years since the trailers were parked off Groom Road, FEMA has set a target date of November 2008 to have all residents out of the Baker trailers and into permanent housing.

Mental health help for Katrina-area first responders (NO Times Picayune, 10/11)

The LSU medical school will provide individual and group counseling for police, firefighters, and other rescue workers and their families in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. The LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans will provide a part-time psychiatrist and two full-time social workers under a \$250,000 contract to be overseen by the state Attorney General's Office, Kris Wartelle an attorney general's spokeswoman, said Thursday. The Legislature appropriated the money at the request of Attorney

General Charles Foti, who learned about the need during meetings with New Orleans firefighters, Wartelle said. "There is a tremendous need for this type of service in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita," Foti said. The program will be administered by Dr. Howard Osofsky of the medical school's psychiatry department and will cover all areas affected by Hurricane Katrina including Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, Plaquemine and the River parishes.

Gov't May Buy Thousands of Miss. Homes (Washington Post, 10/10)

The federal government is considering buying out as many as 17,000 homes along the Mississippi coast and remaking the land into a vast hurricane-protection zone, raising anxieties that it could destroy the waterfront lives many residents are struggling to rebuild after Katrina. The Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program could cost \$40 billion, including buying the homes, building levees and restoring barrier islands. The land could be converted into wetlands or other public uses, such as golf courses or bike trails, but could not be sold for private development. For Finley Williford, a 42-year-old boat captain, a buyout offer would have been tempting if it had come shortly after Hurricane Katrina destroyed his Bay St. Louis home on Aug. 29, 2005. But instead of leaving, he invested countless hours of labor and more than \$400,000 in two new houses for his family and his father. "If they had showed up a day after the storm, I probably would have taken the money. It's kind of after-the-fact now," Williford said. The buyouts would be voluntary, and the Army Corps plan envisions allowing casinos, hotels and restaurants to continue operating on the coast from Bay St. Louis to Biloxi. But until the proposal becomes more focused, residents are concerned that it could spell the end of their Margaritaville-like communities, where a lifestyle of beaches and boiled shrimp has flourished for decades, and many houses are already built atop stilts.

FEMA looking at elevation grant policy (The Advocate, 10/9)

The federal government could announce this week whether it will compensate Louisiana residents who used their own money to raise their hurricane-damaged homes while \$1.1 billion was tied up in a dispute between state and federal agencies. If it does, it would be a major shift by FEMA and a victory for the tens of thousands of homeowners the state estimates have already begun work and could otherwise be left with nothing. "I do sense there's a commitment on our end to try to recognize those folks, because they did the right thing," FEMA spokesman Butch Kinerney said Tuesday. "We want to make sure we don't penalize people who did what we recommend every day." The hazard mitigation funds have been held up for months by the federal-state dispute over how the money should be disbursed. Complicating the issue for some homeowners: FEMA has said it cannot disburse money to those who have already started elevating their homes. In recent weeks, both sides have expressed optimism that the money could be freed up soon at least to help residents who haven't begun elevating in the two years since hurricanes Katrina and Rita. And FEMA officials say they also are trying to find out whether they can without violating federal law provide aid to those who have already started.