

Disaster News Update –September 17 to 23, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, New York, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Hawaii
- **Fire:** Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Kentucky
- **Hazmat:** New Jersey (Gas Spill)
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** California
- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm:** Florida, Alabama
- **Wind:** California

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [Missouri](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/21)
- [Iowa](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (9/14)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornado (9/7)
- [North Dakota](#): Severe Storms and Tornadoes (9/7)
- [New York](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornado (8/31)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/31)
- [Illinois](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/30)
- [Nebraska](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/29)
- [Ohio](#): Severe Storms, Flooding and Tornadoes (8/27)
- [Wisconsin](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/26)
- [Oklahoma](#): Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding (8/24)
- [Minnesota](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/23)
- [Minnesota](#): Bridge Collapse (8/21 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Texas](#): Hurricane Dean (8/18 – Emergency Declaration)
- Fire Declarations: [Washington \(9/21\)](#), [Oregon \(9/3\)](#), [Idaho \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho2 \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho \(8/29\)](#), [Montana \(8/19\)](#), [Hawaii \(8/17\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

WTC Vets Launch Group to Help Disaster Victims (NY Daily News, 9/23)

Other than the pile at Ground Zero, there's no reason the two NYPD cops, Port Authority lieutenant and financial honcho would know each other. Bound by their service during the city's most desperate days, the four men have joined together to create the nonprofit group HEART 911. The organization aims to use the considerable experience of rescue and recovery workers who labored at Ground Zero to help future disaster victims across the nation. "First and foremost, we honor the souls that were lost on 9/11," said retired Port Authority Police Lt. and HEART founder William Keegan. Second, "We're going to have guys who are the most highly trained rescue and recovery workers in the world," said Keegan, 52. The group - its acronym stands for Healing Emergency Aid Response Team - plans to rush to help Americans in need, especially those who came to New

York's aid. "Perhaps I can be more compassionate, because I have gone through this," said retired NYPD Emergency Service Unit Lt. John Moran. The group is led by Keegan, Moran, Owen McCaffery, also a retired ESU lieutenant, and Tom Thees, a retired Morgan Stanley executive who acts as the organization's primary fund-raiser. Thees met Keegan while helping organize a 2002 concert honoring 9/11 rescue workers. The nonprofit has raised \$25,000 and plans an October trip to help rebuild the homes of elderly Katrina victims in St. Bernard Parish, adjacent to New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward. The group already has about a dozen volunteers and is pushing to raise more money and recruit another 50 volunteers.

Christian group offers hope after disasters (Sarasota Herald Tribune, 9/22)

Hurricane trauma? Nowhere to turn? Three words: Network of Hope. Volunteers in this Christian-based nonprofit organization are being trained to soothe local victims of natural disasters, and they are campaigning for a major ripple effect. A year after the devastating slew of storms in 2004, founder and Executive Director Nancy Kenney and her team helped launch resource outlets in Manatee, Sarasota and Volusia counties. Their goal: to educate and prepare church members for emergencies and to lead their immediate mobilization. Thus far, 12 churches in Manatee County are being instructed on Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations and protocol.

Ohio flood recovery needs volunteers (DNN Disaster Volunteers, 9/21)

"After writing a story yesterday for DNN about the ongoing flood recovery in northern Ohio, I learned that there are still cleanup volunteers needed in at least two communities there: Ottawa and Shelby. Bobby Olashuk of Volunteer Connection in Ottawa said they especially needed volunteers willing and ready to get dirty by cleaning out crawl spaces for residents. They also need volunteer teams with special equipment such as backhoes and heavy machinery. Interested in helping out in either area? You can call Ottawa's Volunteer Connection at 419-782-3212. To help in Shelby, call Shelby Helpline Ministries at 419-347-8711. To learn of other ways to help with the Ohio flood recovery, contact Mary Woodward of Ohio Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (OHVOAD) at 740-509-1132."

Network of Hope seminar offers stability after storm (Bradenton Herald, 9/20)

With more than two months of hurricane season to go, the local Network of Hope isn't taking safety for granted. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, the network will hold a seminar on early-response training for churches and other volunteers who want to mobilize in the wake of a possible disaster. The training will take place at Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, 6510 Third Ave. W. in Bradenton. Network of Hope aims to train churches to be neighborhood centers because a church is such an important part of its neighborhood, said Nancy Kenney, the founder and executive director of the neighborhood ministry. "I've worked a lot of hurricanes and seen where the holes are, and the church can perfectly fill those holes," Kenney said. There are about a dozen areas of the county identified as needing aid. More than 40 Manatee churches are part of the network, but their level of involvement varies. Kenney is a member of Journey Assembly of God in East Manatee. Church on the Rock in Palmetto has 62 people on its Network of Hope team, and a work team of about 10 people helps church members before and after a

disaster, said Barbara Kibben, a member of the church. Kibben has received early-response training in the past, and so have most of 62 team members. The team passes out surveys to the members of its church so it can identify their needs, whether it's help evacuating, boarding up windows or doing something else.

Hurricane Rita volunteers still needed (DNN Disaster Volunteers, 9/18)

“Hurricane Humberto surprised southeast Texas last week, coming ashore with winds of 85 mph and heavy rains. While it appears that the region escaped extensive damage, many responders said they worry about the impact on homes that were still awaiting repairs to the damages caused two years ago by Hurricane Rita. Angela Baker of Rita Recovery in Beaumont, Texas, said she knows those damages not only affect the physicality of the home, but that they also affect the emotions of the homeowners who've been struggling for so long. She said Rita Recovery is still working on more than 500 cases from that 2005 hurricane and they are still in great need of volunteer repair and rebuild teams for the areas around Beaumont and Port Arthur. Interested? Check out the Rita Recovery Web site (<http://www.umcortexas.com/>) or give them a call at (409) 892-0140.”

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Fairs help residents cope in case of disaster (Sacramento Bee, 9/23)

Two fairs teaching residents about what to do in the event of an earthquake, flood or fire, as well as pandemic flu, terrorism and hazardous materials incidents, were held across the city from each other as part of National Preparedness Month. Both fairs stressed the importance of the disaster kit -- including three days' worth of food and water because that is the average time it may take for help to come. One of those kits came as a Christmas gift for Sharon and Michael Whitton. The Parkway Estates North couple decided to share the knowledge and organized the disaster preparedness event in south Sacramento last year, now held annually. "The best thing anyone can do is be prepared," said Sharon Whitton at the event held in the parking lot of the Sacramento County sheriff's Florin station on 65th Street. The Whittons have a kit not only for the two of them, but one for Smoky the cat. The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District's Community Emergency Response Team passed out fliers at the events highlighting free courses offered on disaster awareness, safety and techniques.

150 attend event preparedness event at TX fire station (Dallas Morning News, 9/22)

Texas weather can be unpredictable, but when storms turn deadly or disaster strikes, some Allen residents want to be the ones on whom others depend. About 150 registrants turned out this week for the second National Preparedness Month event, held at the Allen Fire Department central station. Participants learned about safety and emergency management. Many families came to educate themselves about how households can contribute to a disaster response plan, but others were there to learn about how they could participate in a group initiative. Dave Campbell, coordinator for Allen's Citizen Emergency Response Team, spread the word about his group's work. Mr. Campbell

recently began an eight-week training course that runs each Thursday evening at Allen's Ronald Gentry Training Center.

Emergency Operations Center invites public to tour facility (Macon Telegraph, 9/17)

The Macon-Bibb County Emergency Management Agency is inviting the public to tour the Emergency Operations Center during Emergency Preparedness Night on Tuesday at 7 p.m. "We're helping people become a little more prepared in disaster situations," said Sandra Stone, the Community Emergency Response Team coordinator for Macon and Bibb County. Families will be able to register for door prizes and enjoy light refreshments as they learn about assembling disaster kits and tour the mobile Emergency Command Center.

OH Kids Get Prepared (Government Technology, 9/17)

Approximately 1,500 fourth through sixth graders gathered on Shawnee State University's campus September 6 for a National Preparedness Month event titled "Scioto Kids Get Ready." The event was hosted by Scioto County Health Department along with Scioto County Emergency Management Agency. The community came together and brought kids to the campus to teach them about preparing for disasters in hopes that they would return home and share the message with their family members and friends. During the day, the students watched a movie titled "Disaster Dudes" which featured kids of about the same age encouraging them to get prepared for emergencies. After the movie, approximately 40 response agencies were gathered in the parking lot to give the students a chance to explore hands-on and learn about the different agencies, as well as encourage them to think about a career as a police officer, firefighter and/or emergency medical technician. The children also saw preparedness presentations by Red Cross, Southern Ohio Medical Center, law enforcement agencies and emergency management staff. Scioto County was one of four counties selected by The Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) to host events during the month of September.

Be Ready Camp Graduates 50 Sixth Graders (Government Technology, 9/17)

As part of National Preparedness Month, 50 Youth Preparedness Delegates graduated from Be Ready Camp, an educational experience for sixth graders focused on building preparedness skills for natural and man-made disasters. During a full-scale disaster exercise, the delegates assumed the role of public safety professionals. The curriculum introduces survival and first aid, disaster psychology and terrorism awareness, as well as how to create a family disaster plan and kit. Alabama Homeland Security Director Jim Walker describes the program as a "responsible investment in the future leadership of our state."

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Tornado Cleanup Begins in Florida (Disaster News Network, 9/24)

Cleanup from a tornado that damaged more than 100 homes in Eustis continued Sunday. "We have a wonderful response already," said Michael Tart, president of Lake and Sumter Emergency Recovery (LASER). LASER - Lake County's long-term recovery

organization - deployed assessment teams door-to-door Friday to check on immediate needs following the Thursday night EF-1 tornado. Teams included case managers from the United Methodist Committee on Relief along with the organization's construction coordinator, who was helping plan immediate repairs to shore up some homes. Tart said at least 20 homes will need to be completely rebuilt. The county estimated property damage at nearly \$6.2 million. County officials asked volunteers wanting to take part in the cleanup to check in at the Bay Street Baptist Church. Tart said teams from the Southern Baptists and other groups were in town cleaning up debris and removing downed trees. LASER was coordinating donations and volunteers. "If anybody wants to donate or volunteer, they should visit the LASER Web site or call our office," he said.

Florida storm damages 50 homes (Associated Press, 9/21)

Severe weather, including a tornado, damaged about 50 homes in central Florida, before the system became a tropical depression Friday and had parts of the Gulf Coast under tropical storm warnings. Only two injuries, both minor, was reported in the area about 30 miles northwest of Orlando, Lake County emergency management spokesman Chris Patton said. Crews went door to door to make sure everyone was safe after the storm. The tornado touched down late Thursday and reports confirmed it was an F1 twister, with winds estimated at 105 mph, the National Weather Service said. It spawned from a storm system that crossed through the state before spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. The system developed into a tropical depression Friday, with tropical storm warnings posted from Apalachicola in Florida's Panhandle westward to the mouth of the Mississippi River, including New Orleans, the National Hurricane Center said. Two to 6 inches of rain were expected. At 2 p.m. EDT, the depression had top sustained winds of about 35 mph and was centered about 50 miles southwest of Apalachicola. It was moving northwest near 11 mph, and its center will be moving nearly parallel to the coastline Friday, forecasters said. Rain and wind from the system were still over parts of Florida.

President Declares Major Disaster For Missouri (FEMA, 9/21)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for Missouri to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding during the period of August 19-21, 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 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 the counties of Dade, Dallas, Greene, Laclede, Lawrence, Polk, and Webster. Federal funding also is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Michael L. Parker as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Parker said that damage surveys have been requested and will be conducted as soon as the situation permits.

OH Recovery Groups Expect Flood of Cases (Disaster News Network, 9/21)

Long-term recovery committees in northern Ohio expect to see hundreds of cases come across their desks as residents cope with last month's severe flooding. "We were told to

estimate that about 10 percent of those registered with (FEMA) will come to us," said Maile Doyle, chairman of Hancock County's long-term recovery committee. "Right now (FEMA's) around 2,000 registrations, so we'll possibly see 200. We won't know for sure until the dust begins to settle." The cities of Findlay, Arlington and Bluffton all experienced flood damage. Seven other counties - Putnam, Allen, Hardin, Richland, Crawford, Wyandot and Seneca - received federal disaster declarations. Putnam County responders expect at least 140 cases. In Crawford County, flooding destroyed more than 60 homes and caused major damage to another 300. Richland County's damage numbers were similar. The Rev. J.C. Church said flooding hit throughout Crawford County with the cities of Bucyrus, Galion and Crestline the hardest hit.

Town's tornado victims getting back to normal (Bismarck Tribune, 9/18)

Some Main Street stores have reopened as this community recovers from an Aug. 26 tornado that killed one person and injured 18. Now officials want to get the grocery store back in service. "We are trying to work with the grocery store owners to come up with a temporary location, because it's such a vital piece of the rural community and its infrastructure," city administrator Marcy Douglas said. "We need that grocery store." The city of about 950 is asking for volunteers to help with cleanup on Sept. 29 and to help with a "rebuild" weekend Oct. 19-21. Officials say carpenters and roofers are needed. State and federal disaster officials say about 80 Northwood residents have registered with FEMA. FEMA said a disaster recovery center opened Saturday at the city's community center with representatives from FEMA, the Small Business Administration and nonprofit agencies that specialize in disaster needs. President Bush declared Northwood a disaster area earlier this month. Residents of Northwood are being surveyed this week about their needs and ideas for the future, to help with the town's recovery.

California Cleans Up After Wind Storm (Disaster News Network, 9/18)

An intense wind storm caused an estimated \$3.6 million in damages in a small southeastern California town, officials said. Damages from the storm were still being assessed Tuesday and officials said the total amount could go as high as \$10 million. Imperial County officials said the National Weather Service has not determined if it was a tornado that struck Palo Verde, a town of 236 residents located about 125 miles east of San Diego. The powerful microburst damaged more than 30 structures, with 13 condemned and eight others destroyed. Miguel Monroy, spokesperson for Imperial County emergency management, said those numbers included homes and businesses.

Additional Oklahoma Counties Receive Disaster Assistance (FEMA, 9/17)

The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and FEMA announced that 12 additional counties have been approved for individual disaster assistance and 20 counties for public disaster assistance. The Presidential Disaster Declaration is the result of damages from the severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes occurring August 18-September 12. Individual assistance, to be coordinated by OEM and FEMA, can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) also will be available to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance. With the announcement, 15 counties are now eligible for individual assistance

for the severe weather which occurred August 18-September 12. Individuals in Canadian, Cleveland, Comanche, Custer, Grady, Kiowa, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Pottawatomie, Seminole, and Stephens counties, affected by this disaster, are now eligible to apply for federal individual assistance with the announcement. Individuals in Blaine, Caddo, and Kingfisher have already been designated for Individual Assistance.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Chertoff promotes anti-bomb training for local police (Associated Press, 9/21)

U.S. police agencies need to understand the latest terrorist bomb-making techniques being used overseas if they are to help thwart domestic bombings, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff said Thursday. Chertoff, in a visit to Philadelphia, said his agency is training state and local police in several cities in the wake of terrorist bomb attacks in London, Glasgow and other cities. DHS has also created a Web site on which they share information gleaned overseas with local bomb squad members and other law enforcement. "The idea is to train them in what is going on in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other parts of the world," Chertoff said at a City Hall news conference, where he was flanked by the mayor, police commissioner and others. Improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, have caused many of the military and civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. "We go into places like Iraq, where the military is collecting literally cutting-edge information about ways bombs are being put together," Chertoff said. "We take the materials they are discovering written materials, recipes for bomb-making and we put it over the Internet." The site is password protected, but available to a few thousand law enforcement officers. The bomb-training program will be introduced in numerous cities, Chertoff said.

Drill shows Utahns must rely on themselves in outbreak (Salt Lake Tribune, 9/21)

In just eight days, a highly virulent strain of the flu swept across Utah, sickening about 53,000 people. Health department phones rang off the hook. Emergency rooms and intensive care units brimmed with nearly 8,000 patients. About 760 people died. The crisis triggered a ripple effect in Utah's economy, sending gasoline prices soaring to \$5 a gallon and causing 30 percent absentee rates in businesses. Public officials wrestled with difficult questions. Should the state shut down schools? Churches? And how will Utah's small stock of anti-viral medications be divvied up? Such a mock crisis unfolded this week as part of a three-day, statewide exercise testing the Utah public health system's ability to respond to a flu outbreak. At the end of it, one thing was abundantly clear: Utahns must rely on themselves, not the government, to survive a serious public health crisis, said A. Richard Melton, deputy director of the Utah Department of Health.

CA Mobile Hospitals Prepped for Disaster (Disaster News Network, 9/19)

What is being billed as the "world's largest mobile civilian hospital" – actually there are three of them – could be pressed into service if a major disaster were to occur in California. "When disaster strikes, being prepared is key to saving lives," said Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. "The state's new mobile field hospitals and our trained volunteer emergency responders are going to help prepare California to quickly and

effectively provide emergency services during a major medical disaster." "In California, it's not a matter of if a disaster will strike, but when," added Dr. Cesar Aristeiguieta, director of the state's Emergency Medical Services Authority. "In our state, emergency preparedness is a key focus of the governor's administration as well as the Legislature," he said. "We're always very concerned about it because we face threats from earthquake and from fires and floods and from other natural and man-made disasters on a very regular basis. We are clearly the leaders in the nation when it comes to disaster preparedness." California spent \$18 million to purchase the three mobile field hospitals.

Evacuation plans for N.O. homeless (N.O. Times Picayune, 9/18)

Under threat of a hurricane, the homeless in New Orleans will be able to catch a free ride out of harm's way. The city's Office of Emergency Preparedness has revised its evacuation plan to include buses at the New Orleans Mission, 1130 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., to transport homeless people out of the city. The buses should be boarded 54 hours before a hurricane is expected to make landfall in the metro area, said Thomas Ignelzi, an emergency manager for the emergency preparedness office. The free service will end at 30 hours before landfall, said Ignelzi, whose office recently modified its city-assisted evacuation plan to include the homeless. At the start of this year's hurricane season, pickup sites were established for the elderly and the general population. A specific site was added for the homeless after a nonprofit advocacy group, Unity of Greater New Orleans, pointed out that the homeless population continues to grow and needs special attention, said Ignelzi, who on Monday informed the City Council's Ground Transportation and Parking Committee of the monthlong change.

Georgia drill tests disaster response at mall (Atlanta Journal Constitution, 9/17)

Two men on Sunday entered the Mall of Georgia and touched off a scenario that tested Gwinnett County's disaster response skills. The scenario though live was more fiction than fact complete with mock victims, suspects, explosive devices and fake anthrax. Gwinnett fire, police, public health and homeland security and mall officials teamed up for the first time to stage the weapons of mass destruction drill to see just how well they'd do in a real incident involving the dangerous and deadly substance. The five-hour drill coincided with the September commemoration of National Preparedness Month. "It's as close to a real life event as you can be with a drill," said Vernon Going, a Gwinnett Health Department spokesman. The mock emergency was designed around two suspects, one of whom set off an explosive device in the mall's food court that released a white powder simulating airborne anthrax. The suspect was armed and supposedly barricaded elsewhere in the mall. The drill allowed emergency responders to test their procedures and ability to work together to restore safety. Observers were there to evaluate their performance.

FEMA Tests IPAWS Alert System (Federal Computer Weekly, 9/17)

A partnership between FEMA and Sandia National Laboratories might finally bring the country's critical emergency alert system (EAS) into the digital age. FEMA and Sandia began small-scale implementations of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) in several Gulf Coast states in August, at the start of the active part of the 2007 hurricane season. If those and other small-scale implementations planned for next year

are on track, officials involved in IPAWS' development said a national implementation of the new alert system could happen by 2010. "This year's pilots were aimed at demonstrating that the system could deliver more than radio and TV alerts and at getting buy-in from [state and local] emergency managers," said Ron Glaser, IPAWS program manager at Sandia. "We're hoping to pilot the initial level of the Trans-enterprise Services Grid (TSG) and other systems for the 2008 hurricane season." The TSG is a core element of IPAWS that will enable the new EAS to operate securely across federal, regional, state, local and tribal jurisdictions involved in major emergency responses. The Internet-based IPAWS will make it easier for emergency managers to communicate alerts and other emergency-related messages to the public, program officials said.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Two years after Rita, La. town recovers in slow motion (Associated Press, 9/23)

This Louisiana town has dried out and cleaned up since getting flattened by Hurricane Rita. But Cameron's recovery moves in slow motion: nearly everyone still lives in temporary housing. The post office operates out of a trailer. The only bank in town does business out of a trailer. Darlene Dyson makes a living by selling shrimp from a trailer. Then she picks up her 7-year-old son and brings him to their home: a trailer. "It's not like it was before the storm, that's for sure," Dyson said. Rita struck two years ago, Sept. 24, 2005, a Category 3 storm whose 120-mph winds and 9-foot storm surge ruined every structure in the southwestern Louisiana towns of Johnson Bayou and Holly Beach, bringing similar destruction to southeastern Texas. About 100 died in Texas, including 23 senior citizens whose bus exploded during evacuations. The storm caused no fatalities in Louisiana, but plenty of property damage in Cameron and Vermilion parishes. In all, there were \$5.8 billion in property insurance claims in Texas and Louisiana, according to a Texas insurance group. In Texas, the storm resulted in 220,641 insurance claims that totaled \$2.8 billion, said the Insurance Council of Texas. In Louisiana, there were 201,157 claims totaling \$2.6 billion, the group said. In Cameron, the parish courthouse is one of the few buildings that survived Rita. It was a town of about 2,000 residents. Local officials estimate today's population at about half that.

Little money disbursed for TX Rita housing repairs (Associated Press, 9/23)

In the two years since Hurricane Rita struck Texas, records show that the state has spent less than 1 percent of the federal money allotted to fix or replace thousands of ruined homes. East Texas officials, whose counties were among those hit hardest after Rita roared ashore with 120 mph winds, say the state government has been slow to release funds. But state officials blame strict federal rules and argue that Texas received less money than Louisiana and Mississippi. "It really appears to me that the state has had an overabundance of caution to prevent fraud and abuse," said Walter Diggles, executive director of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments. "Every time we talk to them they say, 'Look, we don't want a Katrina,' or fraud with individual distributions." When Rita made landfall near Sabine Pass on Sept. 24, 2005, it damaged about 80,000 properties in 22 counties of Southeast Texas. Some 15,000 homes were left in need of repairs. Texas was awarded more than a quarter-billion dollars in two separate federal

housing assistance installments. So far, the state and the three regional councils of governments it enlisted have disbursed less than \$200,000 of the federal housing assistance. And more than \$210 million remains untouched while Texas looks for a private contractor to do the repairs or rebuilding. Thirteen households had been assisted out of 423 that have qualified for help. Another 4,012 applicants are on state waiting lists for home repairs.

Road Home shortfall \$1 billion higher (New Orleans Times Picayune, 9/21)

The Road Home shortfall likely has shot up to between \$5.6 billion and \$6.6 billion, according to the state's latest weekly estimates, about \$1 billion more than the last range reported. The new estimates come as state leaders prepare to head to Washington next month to make a final push in Congress for more federal money to bail out the program. The Road Home was created in 2006 using \$7.5 billion in federal housing block grants, but that's now woefully insufficient. At the current rate of grant payouts, and at the current closing average of \$70,015 per grant, the program will exhaust its current budget somewhere around the 98,500th grant, probably in January. The last time the Louisiana Recovery Authority released the range of the Road Home deficit, on Aug. 12, it was hovering around \$5 billion, based on the assumption that about 151,393 applicants would ultimately be eligible for grants averaging \$72,028. Now, based on the new data crunched Thursday, the state estimates anywhere from 162,721 to 176,826 recipients will get close to \$70,000 per grant.

Report: LA given less than its share of hurricane aid (N.O. Times Picayune, 9/20)

A new report by two independent policy research groups backs up Louisiana's long-held contention that the state got shortchanged on federal recovery money after the 2005 hurricanes in comparison with Mississippi, which suffered far less damage. "The amount of federal aid provided to Mississippi and Louisiana is not proportional to the amount of damage each state suffered," concluded the report released this week by GulfGov Reports, a joint project of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany, N.Y., and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana. The GulfGov project, financed by a \$900,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, is independent and represents stakeholders in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Still, the report's findings on the distribution of federal housing recovery money come down solidly on the side of Louisiana in an argument that has angered Mississippi officials and drawn a rebuke from the White House. The GulfGov report homes in on the distribution of Community Development Block Grants, or CDBG, the federal housing dollars that were used by Congress as financial aid for states' hurricane recovery.

Report blasts feds for slow recovery (The Advocate, 9/19)

The pace of recovery in Louisiana and Mississippi continues to drag because federal disaster aid programs now in place were not designed to handle the catastrophic damage left behind by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a new report charges. The latest installment of the "GulfGov Reports" by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government looks at FEMA's Public Assistance funding and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program. The report says the slow disbursement of FEMA

public assistance grants and HUD block grant awards has proved "frustrating to local governments at best and debilitating to their recovery efforts at worst." "While the federal government has tried to adapt existing programs to get the money flowing to the affected areas, it is evident from the continuing slow pace of the recovery more than two years after the storms that other avenues need to be explored," the joint report suggests. In addition to the "sluggishness" of federal aid distribution, the report contends that the amount of federal aid provided to Louisiana and Mississippi is not proportional to the amount of damage each state suffered.