

Disaster News Update –September 3 to 9, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Hawaii, Washington, California, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, South Dakota, Nebraska, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, New York, New York, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama.
- **Extreme Heat:** California, North Carolina
- **Fire:** Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Tennessee
- **Heavy Rains / Flooding:** Texas, Missouri, Indiana
- **Hurricane:** North Carolina

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [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)
- [Maine](#): Severe Storms and Flooding (8/8)
- Fire Declarations: [Oregon \(9/3\)](#), [Idaho \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho2 \(8/30\)](#), [Idaho \(8/29\)](#), [Montana \(8/19\)](#), [Hawaii \(8/17\)](#), [Montana \(8/16\)](#), [Hawaii \(8/14\)](#), [Wyoming \(8/12\)](#), [Montana \(8/4\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Operation HOPE Urges People to Prepare Financially (Yahoo News, 9/7)

Operation HOPE, a financial literacy and empowerment nonprofit, today announced that it will provide free Emergency Financial First-Aid Kits (EFFAKs) and Preparation & Recovery Seminars to help Americans prepare for the challenges they might face after a disaster or personal emergency. The EFFAK, a user friendly, fill-in-the-blank document, is available through HOPE Coalition America (HCA) online at www.operationhope.org or toll-free at 800-480-2520 as FEMA document #532. The document and accompanying seminar will be offered as free consumer resources both during the month of September and in the future. During Financial Preparedness Month, EFFAK seminars are being held in Louisiana, Mississippi, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and New York City. Anyone interested in hosting an emergency preparedness seminar at their business or community

agency is urged to call 877-592-4673 toll-free, and ask for HOPE Coalition America (use prompt 246 for calls after 5:30 pm PDT) to schedule a seminar.

Volunteers still needed in Minnesota (DNN Volunteer News, 9/7)

The cleanup from August's severe flooding continues in Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota. Nechama Jewish Disaster Response just issued its volunteer call for this Sunday, Sept. 9. Their cleanup teams will be headed to southeast Minnesota to help residents in either the city of Rushford or in Winona County. You do not have to be Jewish to work with Nechama. If you're interested and want more details, contact Nechama Director Seth Gardner at 763-732-0610 x1 (office), 612-910-7152 (cell), or email: sgardner@nechama.org.

Couple Chooses A Different Way For Retirement (DNN Volunteer News, 9/5)

Ron and Sandy Kast didn't want to be typical retirees. The Big Rapids, Mich., couple said when they both finally left their full-time jobs, it wasn't time to sit back. "We had always said we wanted to do something with ourselves," Ron Kast said. When Hurricane Ivan hit in 2004, they heard about the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and its volunteer Disaster Response Services (DRS) teams who deploy to sites around the U.S. for one to three weeks at a time. "Sandy read an article about them, then told me, and we said, 'That sounds like something we could do.' So we called them up and that's how it all started," he said. Sandy Kast called the article an answered prayer. "We've been so blessed in our lives," she said. "When we retired we wanted to do something for (God)." Since that phone call to DRS, the Kasts have gone on eight deployments to various disaster recovery sites. They just returned from working as needs assessment managers in Aberdeen, S.D., in response to spring floods in that city.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Weekend events designed to promote readiness in Utah (Salt Lake Tribune, 9/7)

Gov. Jon Huntsman declared today through Sunday as Be Ready Utah Weekend, encouraging Utahns to prepare their homes, business and schools for emergencies. Huntsman's announcement follows President Bush's declaration of September as National Preparedness Month. The Utah Department of Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security, the Utah Commission on Volunteers and the American Red Cross will work together to help Utahns take the necessary steps to be ready for emergencies. The agency encourages every Utah home to have an emergency supply kit containing necessities, such as water, food and a first-aid kit. They also encourage families to have a plan to communicate and meet during an emergency such as an earthquake, wildfire, flood or severe winter weather. The Utah State Fair began Thursday and fairgoers can find the "Be Ready Utah" booth along the northeast corner of the fairgrounds, parallel to North Temple in Salt Lake City. The American Red Cross is sponsoring Family Preparedness Day on Saturday and will have events throughout the state, including Red Cross mock emergency shelters.

Task force formed to help elderly in weather emergencies (Houston Chronicle, 9/6)

Family members of residents at Seven Acres Jewish Care Services can now feel more comfortable knowing measures are being taken to look after their loved ones in the case of a weather disaster or other emergency. Seven Acres residents can be identified and properly cared for in an emergency thanks to the efforts of the Southeast Texas Senior Care Providers Hurricane Task Force, which designed, ordered and had 350 safety vests delivered to the facility in early August. The vests are a bright neon color, lightweight and waterproof, and have a large pocket for medical information and medications. They have an iridescent strip so the vests can be seen in the dark, and they are easy to slip on and comfortable to wear. The task force was formed because of the lack of adequate plans that were in place for residents of senior communities during hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is chaired by Conroe resident Ann Meador, senior vice president of Methodist Retirement Communities, and Malcolm Slatko, chief executive officer of Seven Acres. Its members are representatives of nonprofit and for-profit long-term care providers that volunteer their time to facilitate emergency disaster plans as required by the state's Department of Aging and Disability Services. Approximately 45 long-term care facilities are represented on the task force.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

President Declares Major Disaster for North Dakota (FEMA, 9/7)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for North Dakota to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes during the period of July 15, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said 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 tornadoes in Cass and Steele counties. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state. Paulison named Connee Lloyd the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Lloyd said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

President Declares Major Disaster For North Dakota (FEMA, 9/7)

FEMA announced that federal disaster aid has been made available for North Dakota to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and a tornado during the period of August 26 -27, 2007. FEMA Administrator David Paulison said 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 a tornado in Grand Forks County. Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and Tribes within the State. Paulison named Connee Lloyd the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area. Lloyd said additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

ND needs data for disaster declaration (Grand Forks (ND) Herald, 9/7)

About a third of this city's 1,000 residents and now tornado victims filled the street before City Hall here Thursday evening to hear local, state and federal officials tell them how important it is to report any and all needs in wake of the twister Aug. 26 that killed one man, injured 18 people and destroyed many homes. Gov. John Hoeven told them he expects a presidential declaration of emergency perhaps today, or no later than Monday, and that some federal aid will then become available in the form of SBA loans and grants for publicly owned buildings. But he's also making a "big push," Hoeven said, to get FEMA to also decide if Northwood qualifies for "individual assistance," which would provide residents with even more aid from FEMA. To do that, his office, Northwood officials and FEMA need the best estimates of total damage to each home, Hoeven said. "We need your help to put together that assessment," he told the people who filled the street, standing, sitting on folding chairs or at picnic tables. FEMA generally looks first at what resources the state can provide after such a disaster and then tries to provide what the state can't, said Jon Wallace, of FEMA's regional office in Denver, after the public meeting. A week ago, Hoeven said FEMA officials and other experts assessing the damage said because 90 percent of the homes were insured, they wouldn't qualify for FEMA individual assistance. But this week, Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., said he was pushing FEMA to take another look because he said many homes were underinsured. Hoeven agreed, saying every bit of damage data from city residents would help. That FEMA individual assistance, if approved, could include money for home repairs and for temporary housing costs, as well as such things as crisis counseling, unemployment because of the tornado and legal services, Wallace said. But low-cost SBA loans are more certain to be approved, he said.

FEMA helps tornado-flattened Kansas town (Associated Press, 9/7)

Around Greensburg at least, FEMA is not a dirty word. Four months after a twister practically obliterated the town, killing 10 people and leaving hundreds homeless, many folks have nothing but good things to say about the federal agency that was lambasted as spectacularly inept and clueless following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. "It was important they were here so quick," said City Manager Steve Hewitt. Eager to improve its image and apply the lessons of Katrina, FEMA moved fast after the May 4 tornado, sending 300 workers and as many mobile homes to the town of 1,500. Not only that, but FEMA announced it would cover 100 percent of the town's cleanup costs a concession made after the storm robbed Greensburg of nearly all of its tax-generating businesses and homes. The agency usually covers only 75 percent, with state and local governments making up the rest. FEMA is paying for 90 percent of the Katrina cleanup. More than 60 FEMA workers remain in Greensburg, and the agency has been busy writing checks. The agency so far has spent \$7.6 million in Greensburg for housing assistance, plus \$1.5 million for other resident needs and almost \$10 million to help fix infrastructure.

Eight More Texas Counties Eligible For Public Assistance (FEMA, 9/6)

Public Assistance to repair damaged infrastructure is available in eight additional Texas counties, FEMA announced today. In addition to the 63 previously-declared counties, communities in Cottle, Haskell, Hopkins, Madison, McLennan, Milam, Taylor and Titus

counties may apply for assistance to recover from severe storms, tornadoes and flooding for the incident period of June 16 - August 3. So far, FEMA has approved \$1,464,116 for Texas communities through the Public Assistance program. State and FEMA officials will hold applicant briefings in affected areas. These briefings will introduce potential aid recipients to the Public Assistance process and address initial questions. Following these briefings, each potential applicant will submit a Request for Public Assistance. FEMA will assign a Public Assistance Coordinator to each applicant to ensure each applicant's needs are met throughout the process.

Wildfire Threat Continues (Disaster News Network, 9/6)

Cooler temperature and higher humidity have helped firefighters in their battle with wildfires across the West. With the Castle Rock fire that threatened the resort community of Ketchum and the Sun Valley ski area now fully contained, firefighters began mop-up and rehabilitation work in the area. All evacuation orders – mandatory, voluntary and advisory – have been lifted. The Cascade Complex of fires remained Idaho's largest wildfire, growing to more than 278,000 acres. It was burning about 27 miles east of Cascade and remained at 30 percent containment. Evacuations were in place. Evacuations also remained in place for the Greys Creek fire, two miles east of Indian Valley. The other large blaze in Idaho, the East Zone Complex of three fires, has grown to more than 246,000 acres. Full containment was expected Sept. 30. Evacuations remained in effect in the Secesh, Warren, and South Fork communities; more than 500 structures were reported threatened. Elsewhere, nearly three dozen other large active fires were reported burning throughout the U.S, the National Interagency Fire Center reported. Idaho and Montana accounted for almost two-thirds of the total. In Montana, residents in the Rock Creek and Willow Creek area remained under a 24-hour pre-evacuation notice as firefighters battled the Sawmill Complex of four fires burning 22 miles southeast of Missoula. The second largest blaze in the state was the Ahorn fire, which remained at 52,000 acres and 20 percent containment. Evacuations and closures continued in the area. Elsewhere in the West, wildfires were reported burning in Oregon, Washington, California, Wyoming, Utah.

Ohio: Two Counties Added To Federal Disaster Declaration (FEMA, 9/4)

Two counties have been added to the presidential disaster declaration as a result of the severe storms and flooding Aug. 20-28 in northwest Ohio, FEMA and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) announced. That means residents and business owners in Hardin and Seneca counties are now eligible for FEMA's individual assistance, joining Allen, Crawford, Hancock, Putnam, Richland and Wyandot counties, which were designated in the original Aug. 27 declaration.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

Nursing homes face a disaster dilemma (Associated Press, 9/8)

The first victims of Hurricane Katrina never felt the raging winds, never saw the floodwaters. They were two elderly nursing-home residents who died on a school bus that took three hours to load and five hours to travel from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. A

third resident of the Ferncrest Manor Living Center died later at a hospital, and 21 others were treated for dehydration after riding buses that officials said were not air-conditioned, lacked water and had no certified nurses aboard. Authorities blamed the deaths on the stresses of the evacuation. The tragedy illustrates the dilemma facing nursing home operators: Hurricanes can kill, but evacuating frail and elderly people can prove deadly, too. "You're damned if you do, damned if you don't," said Steve Yancovich, administrator of MeadowCrest Living Center in Jefferson Parish. "It took us 3 1/2 hours to load one bus, and we used three buses. That's very stressful on people who are frail and it's exhausting for your staff."

Emergency management warns of weather radio recall (Bradenton (FL) Herald, 9/7) Sarasota County is warning residents that the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled several weather radios because they could fail to receive weather alerts. The recalled radios, which are designed to activate automatically upon receiving a signal from the National Weather Service, are manufactured by Oregon Scientific, Inc. "The radios could fail to receive weather service alert signals in certain areas of the country. In the event of severe weather, this failure could put the consumer's life and property at risk", Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane stated in a press release. The description of the radios in question involves the following weather radios and weather stations:

- All Hazards Portable Weather Alter Radio -- WR103NX
- Portable Public Alert Radio -- WR108
- Public Alert Weather Station WRB308
- John Deere Public Alert Weather Station WRB308J

These radios were sold at retail stores nationwide, including some electronics and sporting goods stores, online retailers and in catalogs from December 2005 through June 2007, the press release stated. The radios cost between \$30 and \$150. No other models are included in this recall.

Governor Unveils Ready Illinois Website (Illinois Press Release, 9/6)

Disaster preparedness information is just a mouse click away with a new state Web site unveiled by the Blagojevich administration during a statewide emergency management conference today in Springfield. The Ready Illinois Web site (www.Ready.Illinois.gov) offers comprehensive information on steps people can take before emergencies happen, what to do once a disaster has occurred, and tips for recovery after the event. In addition, during a large-scale disaster, current information about the situation and details about such things as shelters and road closures can be posted on the site to help people access needed information. Recent disasters like Hurricane Katrina have taught all of us an important lesson - personal preparedness is critical. And, the new Ready Illinois Web site provides the information people need to build a disaster kit, develop a family communications plan and get emergency training, which can help them be better prepared for any type of disaster, said Governor Rod R. Blagojevich. Col. Jill Morgenthaler, the Governor's deputy chief of staff for public safety, unveiled the new preparedness Web site to more than 800 emergency management, fire, law enforcement and public health officials from throughout Illinois who were in Springfield this week for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency's annual conference in Springfield.

New Tech-Savvy Checklist For Disaster Preparedness (EarthTimes, 9/5)

AxcessPoints, an online planning resource that organizes critical personal, medical and financial information to minimize the impact of a natural disaster, today announced a tech-savvy checklist to help Americans prepare for a catastrophe. Coinciding with the launch of National Preparedness Month in September, AxcessPoints' Top 10 outlines how the Internet, laptops, cell phones, social networking and other breakthroughs can vastly improve disaster preparedness, while expediting the recovery process. "The ability to retrieve critical financial and personal information after a catastrophe is key to expediting the recovery process," said AxcessPoints CEO Karlyn Carnahan. "Top 10 Disaster Tips For A Digital World is a short survival guide that shows how technology can help minimize the financial and psychic losses resulting from a catastrophic event." The full version of the Top 10 is available at <http://www.axcesspoints.com/>. Those who open an account during September will receive a free Multi-Tool, a pocket-size toolkit that can help handle any minor emergency.

State to card emergency personnel (Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 9/4)

A statewide initiative for photo IDs for all emergency personnel is taking shape across Western Pennsylvania. The goal locally is to provide standardization among IDs for all responders in 13 counties around Pittsburgh. Armstrong County Emergency Management Coordinator Randall J. Brozenick said his office is ready for a flood of applications for cards for police, fire, emergency responders and local amateur radio operators. More than 1,000 identified through the system in Armstrong County will have access to respond to emergencies, Brozenick said. The ID cards are slated to be issued in compliance with a rule of the Department of Homeland Security's Counter Terrorism Task Force, he said. Brozenick also said the cards issued in the county will be valid anywhere in what is known as Southwestern Pennsylvania Region 13, a 13-county region that includes Pittsburgh. He said that while the focus of Region 13 is terrorism awareness, responders can be called on in any type of emergency such as flooding, extensive high-wind damage, blizzards or river ice jams, which could cause flooding. He also said that responders will continue to receive advanced training in handling situations ranging from weather-related emergencies, hazardous materials events or various types of terrorist attacks. "We have to be ready for any type of civil emergency," Brozenick said. Westmoreland County Emergency Management Coordinator Richard Matason said the identification system will aid in accountability and identification

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

Feds give Louisiana \$74 million for 'Katrina cottages' (The Advocate, 9/8)

Nine months after it was first announced, the federal government on Friday awarded Louisiana \$74 million for the so-called "Katrina cottages," which will serve as models for more permanent housing for disaster victims, officials said. Much of the delay occurred because the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency could not reach requirements set out by FEMA. FEMA required the state agency to develop an acceptable budget and reach agreement with the contractors of the project, Cypress Cottage Partners of Baton Rouge. Last month, the LHFA passed its budget while negotiations with the contractor

continued. "Although I have been discouraged by the delays at the state level, I am pleased that we are finally moving forward," U.S. Rep. Richard Baker, R-Baton Rouge, said in a statement. "Louisiana has a unique opportunity to show the nation how to effectively provide long-term housing for disaster victims." Housing agency officials could not be reached for comment late Friday afternoon. A call placed to their office was not returned. The 500 proposed cottages will contain up to four bedrooms each and can be used as permanent structures once disaster victims leave. Cypress Creek has proposed using them in Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, Abbeville, New Orleans and Jackson Barracks.

Fair offers help to displaced hurricane victims (San Antonio Express News, 9/9)

Lillie Johnson-Miller is angry. She wants to know why her family lost everything to Hurricane Katrina two years ago but is getting only \$10 a month in food stamps and owns very little furniture. The agencies that gathered at the Katrina and Rita Survivors Access to Benefits Fair downtown Saturday could only offer so much to displaced hurricane survivors who have made San Antonio their home, but still are struggling to meet basic needs. About 160 applications for food stamps and housing assistance were processed. FEMA statistics show a grim picture of that struggle. Of 6,718 households FEMA has on record as living in San Antonio, only 615 are getting rent help. The Saturday event at the Municipal Auditorium brought together 27 government and social services for displaced families. "We were planning to do a job fair in November, but we need to focus now on the crisis. People need answers because they are fixing to get evicted," said Toni Marie Van Buren, director of public policy at the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County. "When you deal with the federal bureaucracy, it's a whole new level of red tape." Organizers expected more than 500 people, but about 325 attended. New Orleans native Alfred Campbell, who with others took shelter at San Antonio's KellyUSA (now Port San Antonio), was disappointed with the turnout. Campbell created the Gulf Coast Recovery Group.

FEMA Educates Local Community (FEMA, 9/7)

Seventh Ward Community members gathered at First Pilgrims Baptist Church's Housing Fair Sept. 1, 2007 to learn about assistance available to residents rebuilding in the area. Those who attended received information from businesses, governmental and volunteer agencies, including FEMA. Shelia Forest, a FEMA community outreach education specialist, and Joe Sloan, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) specialist, spoke to area residents and local leaders with questions regarding recovery efforts. Sloan and Forest also handed out publications explaining the NFIP and mitigation issues. "We're here to assist them in rebuilding, relocating or renovating," said Forest. "We want to ensure the local community has the most updated information to help them build their houses safer and stronger." FEMA's availability to the public on Saturday is important for the local community because not everyone has the ability to attend this type of event during the work week, according to Forest. "There are some people who come back to New Orleans for the weekend to make repairs to their home. City Hall and other government agencies aren't open then," Forest said. "People still need the information, and it's important that we're here to give it to them." Several banks, contractors and

representatives from The Road Home Program, Louisiana Department of Insurance and the Housing Authority of New Orleans also distributed recovery related information.

Free booklet on Katrina offered (New Orleans Times Picayune, 9/6)

Louisiana Spirit, a Hurricane Katrina recovery group of local counselors who offer substance abuse, mental health and crisis counseling to hurricane victims, is commemorating the second anniversary of the hurricane by publishing a booklet. "Unsung Heroes" highlights the efforts of 55 people and their acts of kindness after Hurricane Katrina. The booklet applauds locals such as Ronald Wright of New Orleans, who lost everything during Katrina yet helped with evacuating nursing home patients and the homeless; Erik Horne of LaPlace, captain of Atlanta's Oglethorpe University soccer team, who organized a soccer camp for children living in FEMA trailers in the River Parishes; and Lt. Michael Hoover of the St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff's Office, who, as a first responder, worked on the frontlines providing services to first responders in critical situations. The booklet is free to the first 500 people to call the office at (985) 868-2620.