

Disaster News Update – October 29 to November 4, 2007

RECENT DISASTER / HAZARD ACTIVITY (Past 7 days)

- **Drought:** Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee
- **Fire:** California, Arizona
- **HazMat:** Mississippi (HazMat Truck Accident), Mississippi (Pipeline Explosion), Iowa (Chemical Facility Explosion)
- **Heavy rain / Flooding:** Massachusetts, Maine, Hawaii, Maine
- **Strong winds:** Massachusetts, Maine, North Carolina, New Jersey

CURRENT FEMA MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS (Past 30 days)

- [California:](#) Wildfires (10/24)
- [California:](#) Wildfires (10/23 – Emergency Declaration)
- [Texas:](#) Tropical Storm Erin (10/2)
- Fire Declarations: [Hawaii \(10/28\)](#), [California 1 \(10/22\)](#), [California 2 \(10/22\)](#), [California 3 \(10/22\)](#), [California 4 \(10/22\)](#), [California 5 \(10/21\)](#), [California 6 \(10/21\)](#), [California 7 \(10/21\)](#), [California 8 \(10/21\)](#)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWS

Study Aims to Aid Disaster Recovery (Disaster News Network, 11/5)

A coalition of disaster response volunteers in Alabama hopes to organize what they have learned about helping people rebuild after Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina so they can make recovery easier and more effective following future natural disasters. Using \$15,000 from a community resiliency grant from United Way of Alabama as an intermediary for the American Red Cross, the group of volunteers from Gulf Shores United Methodist Church plans to interview some of the hundreds of faith-based, civic and government responders who have been working to bring Baldwin County back after the two devastating storms that crushed coastal areas on the southwestern tip of the state. Amelia Fletcher, head of Servant Ministry at Gulf Shores where the project was being organized, said the physical damage in Baldwin County was nearly repaired. In neighboring Mobile County, however, the storms hit more directly and many homes were still being rebuilt. In both areas, she said, the damage to families was still an open wound. Fletcher said that the recovery in Baldwin County was easier because infrastructure was still in place when residents returned after fleeing the storms. Students still had schools to go to, municipal buildings were intact and businesses were able to reopen with minimal time for repair, she said. "Here, we lost houses and our resort industry for a time with Ivan," she said. "But with Katrina, entire communities have vanished." Mobile County's population is still transient. Many displaced county residents and others who sought refuge from the storms that devastated Mississippi and Louisiana were living in Baldwin County.

Churches Discuss Wildfire Response (Disaster News Network, 11/2)

Church leaders from throughout the San Diego County area gathered Thursday to discuss the response to people affected by the Southern California wildfires. Firefighters, meantime, prepared for a weekend of hot dry winds which could spark new fires. While almost all of the wildfires have been fully contained, red flag warnings were posted across Southern California for Friday night through Sunday. Firefighters and firefighting equipment have been pre-positioned in high risk areas should the Santa Ana winds that spread the fires last week ignite new blazes. Forecasters said the winds this weekend were not expected to be as strong as the ones that whipped the flames last week of nearly two dozen fires. Those fires blackened more than 500,000 acres and destroyed more than 2,000 homes. At times, winds were reported to be gusting from 80 to 100 mph. Disaster response groups and local churches have been assessing damages, providing assistance and looking at long-term recovery needs. The meeting of church leaders - also attended by local, state and federal officials as well as representatives from community- and faith-based disaster organizations - was designed to bring local churches together in order to better coordinate their response efforts. Several of those at the meeting had attended a Southern California VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) earlier in the week.

Hoopa Americorps members travel to help (Eureka Times Standard, 11/2)

An Americorps team from Hoopa is on the front lines in three flood ravaged counties of southeast Minnesota, helping long-term recovery committees with support and the programs needed to recover from the record rains and flooding that devastated the area Aug. 18 and 19. The Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management and FEMA recently announced the Hoopa team, and two others, will be helping with the recovery. The Hoopa team will be working to match donated materials and labors with the residents most in need of home repairs and preparations for the coming winter. "We want to get out there and help people," said Hoopa Americorps member Dusty Brown in a press release. "This is a great way to help them get the resources they need."

Salvation Army Recovery Actions: California Wildfires (PR Newswire, 11/2)

As initial relief efforts wind down following the southern California wildfires, The Salvation Army is beginning to prepare for the extensive recovery ahead. While The Salvation Army has provided more than 160,000 meals and snacks as well as 180,000 drinks for thousands of first responders and survivors, the effort will now begin transitioning into the next phase, emphasizing clean up, rebuilding and financial assistance for those who lost their homes in the fires. Following the 2003 fires, The Salvation Army spent more than \$4 million on mid-to-long term response and recovery, providing a "one-stop shop" for fire survivors working to rebuild their lives after losing so much. Once an applicant's needs have been verified, the Army coordinates with various governmental and non-governmental agencies to provide direct assistance for basic needs including food, clothing and other supplies. In the longer term, Army case-workers also provide resources to help with insurance issues, finance and budget challenges, benefit applications, and the myriad of special needs associated with catastrophic loss. Following the 2003 fires, fully 56 percent of the funds spent went toward with direct financial aid, with the remainder supporting clean-up and rebuilding efforts, counseling and case management and meals and drinks for survivors.

Supporting this long-term effort, to date, The Salvation Army has received major financial assistance from:

- The American public: \$359,283 tallied so far; \$329,062 in online donations alone
- Bristol-Myers Squibb \$100,000 pledged
- Caterpillar Foundation: \$200,000; plus the company has pledged to match up to \$300,000 in donations from Caterpillar and Solar Turbines employees
- FedEx: \$100,000, plus free shipping for Salvation Army-related disaster packages
- Home Depot: \$20,000, plus an account for The Salvation Army to purchase items in need
- Howard Charitable Foundation: \$100,000
- Junior Seau Foundation: 127 \$100 gift cards from Mervyn's. Recipients will receive a 15% discount on purchases. 200 gift cards for Thanksgiving dinner at Seau's Restaurant in Mission Valley.
- KFMB-TV (CBS - San Diego) Ch. 8: \$502,909 in total fundraising during three-day telethon, including;
 - Science Applications International Corporation: \$50,000
 - Solar Turbines: \$25,000
- Los Angeles Galaxy (MLS): Benefit game at the Home Depot Center on November 4 against Hollywood United FC, a team comprised of celebrities including actor Anthony LaPaglia, singer Vivian Campbell and former World Cup player Frank Leboeuf. Proceeds from the game will go to The Salvation Army and American Red Cross.
- Los Angeles Kings (NHL): Benefit games at the STAPLES Center on October 27, October 31, November 3 and November 10
- Mattel: 1,000 20 Q Electronic Handheld games (made by Radica brand); 2,500 UNO card packs; 1,000 American Girl books; Approx 150 Fisher Price Medical Kits
- PepsiCo: Provided in-kind goods, including pallets of water and Gatorade-brand sport drink
- Target: \$100,000
- Safeco: Up to \$200,000 total; company has pledged \$100,000 to match employee donations.
- San Diego Chargers (NFL): \$72,000 raised at San Diego Chargers game on Sunday, October 28
- San Diego Padres (MLB): Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, first baseman Adrian Gonzalez and nearly a dozen front office staff assisted The Salvation Army in serving food and beverages to evacuees at Qualcomm Stadium.
- Wal-Mart: About 30 local Wal-Mart stores donated product to relief organizations, including The Salvation Army; the stores also collected customer donations to be distributed to aid organizations starting next week.
- Washington Mutual: \$100,000 pledged

Operation Southern Comfort to Build Katrina Homes (Syracuse.Com, 11/1)

Two years after Katrina, Norm Andrzejewski wants people to know that the rebuilding efforts are far from over. Andrzejewski is the founder of Operation Southern Comfort, a

local mission that has brought 380 volunteers to the Gulf Coast to assist residents in need. Since January 2006, the group has made nine trips and completed an estimated \$380,000 in improvements to affected homes and communities in Louisiana and Mississippi devastated by the August 2005 hurricane. Andrzejewski said that often the group's most important work isn't done with a hammer and nails. Operation Southern Comfort's next project is building a house for 60-year-old Marilyn Paisley, a St. Bernard Parish, La. resident who has been living with her 84 year-old mother in a FEMA trailer for the past two years. The government has promised them money to rebuild, but that hasn't panned out, said Andrzejewski, so he and his volunteers are stepping in. To help raise the \$50,000 needed to complete the effort, the group is sponsoring a Mardi-Gras themed fundraiser Nov. 10 at Barbagallo's Restaurant in DeWitt. The event, Rebuilding Lives Mardi-Gras Style: A Fundraiser for Operation Southern Comfort, will feature traditional Gulf Coast foods, live entertainment, silent auctions and raffles.

Mexican Red Cross Answers Cross-Border Call for Assistance (Gov. Tech., 10/31)

The Mexican Red Cross sent ten volunteers at the request of the American Red Cross to help reach out to the Spanish speaking community in Southern California affected by the wildfires. "We are thankful to the Mexican Red Cross for sending a delegation of outstanding volunteers to assist us in responding to the tragic Southern California fires," said Cesar A. Aristeiguieta, M.D., FACEP, Director of the California Emergency Medical Services Authority and member of the American Red Cross Board of Governors. "The contribution being made by the Mexican Red Cross to the Southern California relief efforts is exemplary of the dedication of all the volunteers that form the world-wide Red Cross movement." The Mexican Red Cross volunteers are working as part of the American Red Cross shelter team to access the unmet needs of the Spanish speaking community. By working together, the Red Cross is helping to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the assistance they need in finding shelter, meals and a connection to other community services. "This collaboration between the American Red Cross and the Mexican Red Cross demonstrates there are no borders when offering humanitarian assistance," said Isaac Oxenhaut, National Disaster Relief Coordinator of the Mexican Red Cross. "When Hurricane Dean affected us in August, the American Red Cross was there to support our relief efforts. When the request came to help the people of Southern California, the Mexican Red Cross was happy to answer the call." This strategy worked successfully during the American Red Cross response to Hurricane Katrina and is an advantage of the American Red Cross being part of an international Movement that can call on the assistance of sister Red Cross societies around the world.

Volunteers repair six New Orleans fire stations (N.O. City Business, 10/29)

More than 130 volunteers helped repair Hurricane Katrina-damaged fire stations on Saturday at the end of the International Facility Management Association's 2007 conference in New Orleans. After IFMA's World Workplace 2007 Conference & Expo, the IFMA Foundation held its Volunteer Rebuild Project to benefit the NOFD. Volunteers spent the day cleaning, painting and repairing six fire stations. W.W. Grainger Inc., a publicly traded company based in Chicago, donated \$20,000 to Friends of the NOFD to help rebuild the fire stations. Katrina made more than 20 of New Orleans' 33 fire stations inoperable, and many remain uninhabitable and in need of repair, IFMA said.

"We are committed to ensuring a brighter future for the city of New Orleans," said Dave Smetana, Grainger regional branch services vice president. "Getting our local first responders back up and running is critical if we are to achieve this goal. " Bank of the West also provided transportation, food and funds to NOFD. Sebesta Blomberg and Associates and Allied Barton also contributed to the project. IFMA Foundation was established in 1990 as a nonprofit to promote research and education for the facility management industry.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

Drill organizers seek volunteers for mock "attack" (San Jose Mercury News, 11/2)

How would you like to spend the day inside a crowded stadium, pretending to vomit and be drenched in fake chemical gas? Sound like fun? Wait, there's more. Well, you won't get paid. But you will be helping out local firefighters, police officers and paramedics practice for the biggest and most unusual emergency drill in California -- a mock bio-terrorist attack on Nov. 14 in Silicon Valley where 500 guests are attending an all-night rock concert at Municipal Stadium in San Jose. Organizers say it's the first time in Santa Clara County that regular citizens en masse are being asked to participate in this type of drill, which California's 58 counties first began practicing in 2004, as fallout from the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The program, dubbed "Golden Guardian," is funded by DHS and managed by the state Office of Homeland Security. A 2005 drill in Oakland featured a mock attack on a "concert" at McAfee Coliseum. Tim Quigley, executive director of the Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley, is putting out a call to find 500 volunteers who will spend seven hours on Nov. 14 to role-play characters at a mock rock concert. (In reality, organizers will feature movies and live bands throughout the day, plus free breakfast and lunch.) Any volunteer is welcome: That includes kids, senior citizens, people who don't speak English and disabled people who are in wheelchairs, deaf and blind. On drill day, volunteers will be handed cards with their character assignments. They might be asked to act like an obnoxious jerk, a timid grandma, or someone who has just fainted after an unknown chemical gas has been released into the air. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in being one of the 500 volunteers, please pre-register by calling (408) 247-1126 or clicking on www.vcsv.us/. Pre-registration is recommended, but drop-in volunteers are welcome that day too. The drill will be held at San Jose Municipal Stadium at 588 E. Alma Ave on Nov. 14 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.. Contact Lisa Fernandez at lfernandez@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5002.

GA Volunteer Defense Force mobilizes (Atlanta Journal Constitution, 11/1)

Pat Holman's bum eye did him in. Every time the Marietta middle school teacher knocked on the U.S. military's door, recruiters gave him the same song and dance: It's your eye, Pat. Holman has been legally blind in his right eye since birth. Poor vision stood like a stone-faced nightclub bouncer in the way of what he wanted most: to join the military. Until he found the Georgia State Defense Force --- a little-known, all-voluntary military group that operates under the state's Department of Defense. Defense force officers wear military uniforms, but they have to pay for them, as well as their travel expenses. They also don't carry guns. Much like military reservists, they work once a

month but are called upon by the commander of the Department of Defense for special assignments. They search for missing people, provide crowd control at public events and help when disaster strikes, among other duties. The defense force has slightly less than 1,000 members --- including radio consumer guru Clark Howard --- assigned to five brigades throughout the state, in Macon, Columbus, Savannah, Fitzgerald and its headquarters city of Atlanta. Its yearly budget is \$75,000, compared to just under \$6 million in state money and \$254.7 million in federal money for the combined budgets of the Georgia Air and Army national guards, according to Jim Driscoll, spokesman for the state Department of Defense, which oversees all three agencies. More than 100 defense force **volunteers** unloaded and took care of injured Hurricane Katrina evacuees who were transported from New Orleans to Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta. They swarmed southeast Georgia earlier this year, providing 9,000 man-hours of medical support and traffic control, when a massive wildfire took center stage.

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Coastal residents clean up after Noel hits region (Associated Press, 11/4)

Several thousand coastal residents from Massachusetts to Maine faced a second night without power Sunday, and at least two house fires were indirectly blamed on the remnants of Hurricane Noel. The storm struck New England with just a glancing blow Saturday, bringing down tree limbs and knocking out power to 80,000 homes. State officials reported no serious injuries or deaths. By late Sunday afternoon, NStar said 17,000 customers remained without power. "Crews are facing extensive damage to trees and electric equipment," NStar spokeswoman Caroline Allen said in a statement. The company expected to restore power to all its customers by Monday, she said. No evacuations, deaths or serious injuries were linked to the storm in the region, said Peter Judge of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. The state's only serious flooding was on Brandt Point on Nantucket, where roads were closed for a few hours, he said.

Free Breathing Masks Available to S. Californians (FEMA, 11/1)

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services announced the availability of free breathing masks for Southern Californians to use while cleaning up ash around their home or business. The masks, donated by Cardinal Health and delivered free of charge by UPS, will be available at any of the nine local assistance centers that were announced by Governor Schwarzenegger last week. State and public health officials recommend that anyone cleaning up ash from around their home or spending time in ash-covered areas wear at a minimum a well-fitted paper mask or bandana to protect their nose and mouth. Keeping skin covered by wearing long sleeves, full length pants and gloves is also recommended. Special protections such as N95 or P100 respirators are recommended to help protect the lungs from ash and soot if spending long periods of time sifting through a site. Individuals with pre-existing heart and lung conditions should seek advice from their physician regarding use of special protections. The local assistance centers were opened last week to serve as efficient one-stop sources for disaster relief services including information on how to replace records lost in the fires, file insurance claims and apply for

assistance and housing. A wide range of state, federal, and local agencies are represented at the centers.

Long Road Seen for Wildfire Recovery (Disaster News Network, 11/1)

Even as firefighters neared full containment on the wildfires that have burned across Southern California, disaster responders were saying the road to recovery was just beginning. "This is long from over," said Don Read, emergency disaster services director with The Salvation Army. "We have a lot of challenges ahead of us." Firefighters were also looking ahead – to the weekend with the possibility of Santa Ana winds and more fires. Concerned about the return of the hot, dry winds, preparations were under way Wednesday to cope with a new round of fires. Among the efforts was pre-positioning staff and equipment in areas facing a high fire risk. Read's comments came at meeting Tuesday of Southern California Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. It was attended by federal, state and local officials as well as a variety of community- and faith-based organizations. The current wildfires that burned across seven counties have destroyed more than 2,000 homes and blackened more than 500,000 acres. In contrast, Read noted that it wasn't until just two months ago that the last home destroyed in the 2003 Cedar fire - which destroyed 2,232 homes and charred more than 280,000 acres in San Diego County – was rebuilt.

CA Earthquake Overloads Cell Phone Networks (San Francisco Chronicle, 11/1)

In the first real-world disaster test of local cellular networks, thousands of mobile phone users were unable to connect calls in the hour following the 5.6 earthquake that struck the Bay Area shortly after 8 p.m. Tuesday. Wireless carriers said traffic spiked up to 10 times higher than normal, primarily with calls to family and friends, news outlets and emergency services. The sudden jump in calls overloaded local networks for up to an hour, with service sporadic thereafter. The flood of calls also tied up AT&T's landline phone service. Local cell phone executives said the temblor was the first big local event to stress the cellular networks so severely. "This is the first big nonplanned test in the Bay Area," said Dennis McSweeney, area vice president for Sprint Nextel. "We have had events that are intensive on the network for a very short amount of time, like the All-Star Game, but those things you see coming. This is the first time where we've been reactive to something so big." The earthquake itself caused no physical damage to the various wireless networks in the Bay Area. It was all a matter of too many people trying to access a limited amount of bandwidth.

After Fires, Sifting Through the Ashes (Disaster News Network, 10/31)

Wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, work gloves, knee protectors and a protective breathing mask over his nose and mouth, Rick Benito carefully sifted through the remains of his home. "Really, it's an exercise in futility," he admitted. Even so, Benito continued to lift shovelful after shovelful of ash and debris into a wooden sifting tray in the fading hope of finding some mementoes in the house where he and his wife and son had lived for the past 10 years. What he had to show for his efforts were a few broken dishes and blackened odds and ends in a small pile at the end of the driveway. "I haven't really found anything," Benito said. "Just melted stuff and a lot of melted blobs. Nothing of any value." At the front of the Rancho Bernardo property sits his "pride and joy," a 750cc

Kawasaki motorcycle, a charred and melted relic of its glory days on the open road. Benito's next-door neighbor, Curley Dunsmore, has been spending his days doing the exact same thing. He did manage to find his wife's wedding ring and was continuing to sift through the ashes for whatever else he could uncover.

Strong quake rattles U.S. territory (Associated Press, 10/31)

A powerful earthquake has shaken the Northern Marianas, causing jitters among residents over a possible tsunami that did not develop. The low-rise buildings of Saipan swayed and lights dangled for a few seconds as a 7.2 quake jolted this chain of tiny islands around 1:30 p.m. Wednesday local time. Work and classes were momentarily interrupted, but the islands' Emergency Management Office says there was no tsunami. The U.S. Geological Survey says the quake was centered 254 miles north of Saipan and 58 miles north-northwest of the volcanic island of Pagan.

Up to 2,200 evacuees, animals aided at fairgrounds (San Diego Union Tribune, 10/31)

The Del Mar Fairgrounds has traditionally taken in horses and other large animals during an emergency, such as the Cedar and Paradise fires in 2003. Last week was the first time the fairgrounds opened its doors to human evacuees. Fairgrounds officials said it was Solana Beach City Manager Dave Ott who put in a call and urged them to open the state-owned facility to people fleeing the fires raging across San Diego County. The county Office of Emergency Services and the Red Cross cared for up to 2,200 people, fairgrounds officials said. About 30 evacuees remained at the fairgrounds yesterday morning, less than half the number Monday morning. The shelter is expected to close today at noon, but a service center will remain to provide food and other basic assistance. Last week, the fairgrounds and its nearby horse park also housed 2,700 evacuated animals in stables usually reserved for thoroughbreds and world-class show horses. Mostly horses, the four-footed evacuees included a few goats, zebras and llamas. Forty-three horses remained yesterday, but the facilities are expected to close today.

Officials discuss cleanup and cost (San Diego Union Tribune, 10/31)

Debris from one of the nearly 1,600 homes lost in San Diego County is cleared in Rancho Bernardo. Officials may copy a cleanup procedure used after the summer Lake Tahoe fire. Politicians at three levels of government want to clean up debris from the wildfires that roared through San Diego County "better, cheaper and faster" by hiring a single contractor to take charge of the effort. But no officials rushed forward yesterday to pay the bill. State, county and city officials announced at a news conference that they are committed to quickly and efficiently clearing thousands of tons of debris from the widespread fires zones. They talked about relying on the same debris-removal process used last summer after the Angora fire in South Lake Tahoe. In that case, the state took the lead in hiring a contractor and passed the bill on to El Dorado County, which then sought reimbursements from private property owners. Yesterday, the state, county and city would not agree to immediately take the job. Instead, liability will be worked out over the next few days in closed-door meetings headed by San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders. And as elected officials talked about cleaning up, state fire officials began sending crews home. The team fighting the Witch Creek fire was reduced by 300 engines yesterday.

Agencies mobilize assistance for wildfire victims (GovExec.Com, 10/30)

Agencies acted quickly to keep services running and pull together offers of assistance for federal employees and others affected by the Southern California wildfires, but it will be some time before the full demand for aid can be gauged, officials said Monday. "What I've seen on the ground is really impressive," said Theresa Camiling, chair of the Greater Los Angeles Federal Executive Board. "The communication between the federal, county and the states has been just phenomenal.... Obviously, there have been some great losses, but I think a lot of the preventive measures came together because of those [communications] efforts." Camiling said she thought that pre-existing relationships between federal, state and local officials helped the response.

Recovery continues 2 months after floods devastate area (Zanesville Times, 10/30)

Homes and businesses remain empty more than two months after powerful storms and record flooding washed through northwest Ohio, a sign that progress remains slow for officials and residents working to repair flood-damaged cities and towns. Progress and repairs continue, but it's difficult to say when things will fully return to normal, said John Williams, Ottawa's municipal director. "I think it's sporadic," Williams said. "People are coming back to most neighborhoods." Several days of heavy rain in late August caused widespread flooding across an 80-mile swath of northwest and north central Ohio. In Ottawa, the Blanchard River swelled beyond its banks, and about half the down-river town took on water. There's an urgency to finishing repairs and installing working heating systems before winter begins in earnest, Williams said. Some residents are living on the second floor of their homes while work is completed on the first floor, he said. At the abandoned Arrowhead Trailer Park along Route 224 north of town, workers continued to strip flood-damaged trailers for scrap metal. After about two dozen trailers were destroyed by the flood, village officials said the park would be closed permanently. One of the bigger challenges facing homeowners is working to prevent future flooding from causing so much damage, Williams said. Some people are flood-proofing their homes or raising their buildings above the flood plain. Others are moving away from the area.

Browns Valley residents still picking up pieces from spring flood (KXMC, 10/29)

More than six months after fleeing rising floodwaters in the middle of the night, Bill Spotts gave in and turned to salvaging what he could from his condemned house. Spotts, 80, said he emptied his savings account and borrowed money to move across town. He called it "kind of a bad deal" but otherwise didn't want to talk about losing the house on Jefferson Street where he and his wife, Donna, lived for more than 50 years. "I ain't that kind of a guy," he said, loading household items into the back of his pickup truck. "I don't dwell on stuff like that." Other residents of this southwestern town of about 690 people do. They are frustrated that their government's response didn't include help from the FEMA, which said there wasn't enough damage to trigger its funding. The problem is repeated dozens of times a year when small towns are hit by natural disasters. Families are displaced and sometimes lives are lost, but the financial toll on towns with small populations and property values isn't high enough to bring FEMA assistance. That might not be all bad, said Kris Eide, spokeswoman for the Minnesota division of Homeland

Security and Emergency Management. She said FEMA can have some gaps in its complicated flood relief plans that state plans lack.

PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION NEWS

City unveils guides for children on preparing for emergencies (SI Advance, 11/1)

Because many adults are lax in preparing for emergencies, the city is turning its attention to students, hoping they'll urge their parents and other adults to be prepared. Two Ready New York for Kids guides have been unveiled by the Office of Emergency Management in cooperation with the Department of Education. The guides feature colorful, hip and interactive pamphlets that, it's hoped, will intrigue students. One is for elementary school students, the other for those in intermediate and high school, and each has distinct curricula targeting the different age levels. "With Ready New York for Kids, we've created two fun-filled, interactive versions of the guide - so both younger and older students can make sure that no matter what kind of emergency strikes the city, they will be as prepared as possible," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said. The pamphlets - available in nine languages, including English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Haitian-Creole, Urdu, Arabic and Bengali - will be distributed to all 1.1 million city public school students this month. Among other things, each pamphlet focuses on how families should assemble Go Bags, with supplies needed to survive for a few days after a large-scale emergency, and the importance of listening to officials for instructions on what to do in the event of hurricanes, winter storms, blackouts and explosions. OEM Commissioner Joseph Bruno, who pointed out that one in seven New Yorkers is a student, hopes parents will discuss how to prepare for emergencies with their children. For more information about emergency preparedness and the Ready New York campaign, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/oem. The guides are available online.

Hurricane season winding down: Experts wrong (MCT Direct, 10/31)

This year's hurricane season, which officially ends the last day of this month, has seen above-average action, weather experts say, but not the unusually aggressive activity projected in months past. Tropical Storm Noel, which has killed at least 81 people in the Caribbean and on Wednesday threatened Florida's east coast, is no surprise to forecasters. Last week, forecasters predicted one or two more tropical storms and said a mild hurricane also is possible before Nov. 30. November isn't usually an active storm month, and local emergency officials are starting to relax -- a little. Colorado State University hurricane researcher William Gray predicted in April a highly active season based on past storm trends and the formation of La Nina. . Gray predicted 17 named storms, with nine of those becoming hurricanes and five of those storms "intense," meaning Category 3 to Category 5 hurricanes. He later changed his forecast to 15 named storms, including eight hurricanes with four intense hurricanes. The National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, or NOAA, predicted 13 to 17 named storms, seven to 10 hurricanes and three to five intense hurricanes, but later subtracted from the list one named storm and one hurricane. So far this season, which began June 1, there have been 14 named storms, four hurricanes and two intense hurricanes.

http://www.mctdirect.com/search/search_txt.htm?s=forecasters

NYC Mayor and Commissioner Launch Ready NY Kids (States News Service, 10/30)
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno and Department of Education (DOE) Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm today launched Ready New York for Kids, the latest addition to OEM's preparedness campaign. As part of the City's ongoing effort to encourage all New Yorkers to prepare for emergencies, OEM and DOE have created two Ready New York for Kids guides. One guide is designed for elementary school children, the other targets students in middle and high schools. Throughout the month of November, Ready New York for Kids will be distributed to all 1.1 million New York City public school students. Public school teachers will be provided with ideas for preparedness-related lessons and classroom discussions. Ready New York for Kids is available in nine languages, including English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Haitian-Creole, Urdu, Arabic and Bengali. At the event, held at Brooklyn's PS 29, the Mayor, Commissioner Bruno and Deputy Chancellor Grimm were joined by Haleh Nazeri, Executive Director of the New York Division of the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation and Danielle Healy, Associate Director of AIG; which is sponsoring the development and printing of the guides. The guides will also be available on www.nyc.gov or by calling 311.

GULF COAST RECOVERY NEWS

More debris cleaning in Louisiana (Associated Press, 11/4)

A program has been put together by state storm recovery officials and fishing groups to clear upended cars, boats and houses scattered across the marshes of southern Louisiana by the 2005 hurricanes. Four months ago, Coast Guard crews, with federal money from FEMA, had already removed tons of debris from shipping lanes and vital commercial corridors such as the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet. After planning sessions, FEMA pledged to pay for crews to remove the remainder of the debris, setting aside a once-anticipated end to the program in August. But state recovery officials say they are still awaiting details about whether the program will match debris-removal efforts in neighboring Mississippi, set to finish by the end of the year. Much of the remaining Louisiana debris is barely visible from the surface, posing an unseen hazard for boaters and fishers who run afoul of submerged houses and automobiles. First, the Coast Guard plans to perform a six-month survey of the remaining debris to set priorities for the cleanup. The agency has prioritized areas for work to begin at each end of the state.

Hurricane aid in Texas largely unspent (Cox News Service, 11/2)

The federal government has given the Texas housing agency more than half a billion dollars to aid people affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. As of September, only 13 families had been helped, according to a state auditor's report released Thursday. After Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana and Mississippi in August 2005, Texas became home to thousands of hurricane evacuees from New Orleans. The next month, Hurricane Rita destroyed rural areas in Southeast Texas. In May 2006, the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs was awarded \$42.6 million in grants to assist hurricane victims in buying or repairing their homes. As of Sept. 14, the agency had built 13 homes and

spent \$1.1 million, though more than 4,000 families applied for aid, according to the report. The agency was awarded an additional \$428 million in April 2007 for hurricane recovery programs. Of that, \$210 million is set aside for a housing assistance program that gives recipients up to \$40,000 for home rebuilding and repair, and \$12 million is earmarked to rebuild parts of Sabine Pass destroyed by Hurricane Rita. The remainder of the grant is allocated for building apartments and financing other hurricane recovery activities.

Post-Katrina Incidence Rates On the Rise in Gulf Coast (American Health Line)

Fourteen percent of Gulf Coast residents reported serious mental illnesses two years after Hurricane Katrina, compared with 10.9% six months after the 2005 storm hit the area. Ronald Kessler, a health care policy professor at Harvard, on Wednesday presented the study at a Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Disaster Recovery Subcommittee hearing. For the survey, researchers conducted follow-up interviews with 800 of the 1,000 area residents who were first interviewed six months after Katrina. According to Kessler, the percentage of residents reporting suicidal tendencies increased from 2.8% six months after the hurricane to 6.4% as residents' initial optimism for a quick recovery faded. The percentage of serious mental illnesses in the New Orleans area increased slightly from 16.5% six months after the hurricane to 16.9%, Kessler said. However, Kessler could not provide an explanation for why the rates did not significantly increase in an area where people were most affected by the hurricane, the Times-Picayune reports. Anthony Speier, director of disaster mental health operations at the Louisiana Office of Mental Health, said Kessler's report required further analysis, but he speculated that people with mental health problems who were displaced by Katrina would be more likely to experience difficulty returning to the area because they generally have fewer resources and coping skills to deal with recovery efforts.

Baton Rouge to get 80 Katrina cottages (The Advocate, October 31)

Louisiana Housing Finance Agency commissioners approved entering into a contract on Monday with Cypress Partners Group and a division of The Shaw Group Inc. to build 80 federally funded "Katrina cottages" in Baton Rouge. LHFA gave Cypress Group preliminary approval earlier this month to build the modular homes in New Orleans, Lake Charles and Baton Rouge. The development in Baton Rouge, called Arden, is proposed on Lobdell Avenue near Florida Boulevard. It's not clear, however, when construction on the Baton Rouge homes will start. The homes are intended for residents uprooted by the 2005 hurricanes. Ben Dupuy of Cypress Partners, which has a \$75 million federal contract to build the homes, said earlier this month the Baton Rouge site must first pass muster with FEMA on environmental and historical preservation checks. Meanwhile, LHFA gave final approval Monday to the New Orleans project, which would use 75 Katrina cottages to replace Jackson Barracks, even though those homes could be limited to military personnel. Jackson Barracks, the headquarters for the Louisiana National Guard, essentially was destroyed by post-Katrina flooding. The replacement units will be reserved for civilian and uniformed employees of the state military department, a restriction in a little-noticed agreement forged months ago between the military and the Louisiana Recovery Authority.

Hurricane Katrina Mississippi Recovery Update: October 2007 (FEMA, 10/31)

Individual support continues with more than \$1.2 billion to individuals and families:

- 216,539 individuals and families have been approved for Housing Assistance totaling more than \$848 million;
- 134,299 Mississippi survivors have been approved for more than \$412 million in Other Needs Assistance (ONA);
- 14,451 temporary housing units (travel trailers and mobile homes) in service. More than 27,000 families have deactivated their units.
- To assist temporary housing occupants in their recovery, FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons have partnered with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), local business and non-profit organizations to create a series of Helping Hands Workshops. The next workshop will be held in November in Gulfport.
- The workshops address various personal recovery issues facing occupants of FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes. VAL has conducted workshops specifically targeted to occupants in Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River and Stone counties.

Nearly \$2.2 billion has been obligated in the following Public Assistance (PA) categories:

- More than \$721 million obligated for land-based debris removal;
- \$367 million for emergency protective measures;
- \$533 million to repair or replace public buildings;
- \$380 million to repair public utilities;
- \$118 million to repair and restore public recreational facilities such as state parks;
- \$110 million to meet the costs of administering the PA grants;
- \$63 million to repair roads and bridges;
- \$1 million to repair water control devices such as reservoirs and irrigation channels.

An inter-agency campaign, directed by FEMA, has been working to clean up Mississippi's coastal and inland waterways.

- As of October 22, the U.S. Coast Guard has cleared more than 246,530 cubic yards of marine debris from the water since marine cleanup began May 2006 and 10 of 15 marine debris removal contracts are complete.
- More than \$50.1 million has been expended for marine debris removal. Due to the oversight and recommendation by the U.S. Coast Guard project officer, approximately \$100 million of the \$237 million obligated for the project has been de-obligated. Obligated funds can be adjusted if a project can be completed for less than the original project estimate.

Preparing today for tomorrow's disasters

- FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) brings together federal, state, and local governments to prepare communities for future events. Hazard mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards and their effects.
- MEMA, as designated by the Governor of Mississippi, administers the HMGP. MEMA provides eligible grant applicants with assistance in mitigation planning, project selection, application development and reimbursement.
- FEMA has allocated more than \$84 million for various HMGP projects throughout the state.

- Across the state, 246 jurisdictions have MEMA- and FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation plans.
- The amount of funding available for the HMGP following a disaster currently stands at 7.5 percent of the total amount of federal assistance. More than \$433 million in HMGP funds are available for Mississippi.

House votes to boost funds for rebuilding after storms (Newhouse News Serv., 10/29)

The House passed legislation Monday designed to spur the Gulf Coast hurricane recovery by steering additional federal money to storm-damaged communities trying to make improvements as they rebuild. The bill would increase from 75 percent to 90 percent what FEMA pays when local governments propose "alternate projects," such as consolidating or improving facilities, rather than simply rebuilding what was destroyed in a natural disaster. It applies retroactively to the communities hit by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita. Louisiana officials say the recovery from the 2005 storms has been hampered because local communities have not been able to pay the 25 percent share as now required. Under the Stafford Act, FEMA pays 90 percent of the costs of rebuilding public infrastructure, such as schools, sewer systems and roads, or purchasing new equipment, including police cars, school buses and ambulances, damaged in natural disasters. Earlier this year, Congress waived the local 10 percent match for Gulf Coast states. But Congress left in place a provision that says that if communities want to use the federal money for some other purpose, an "alternate project," FEMA will pay only 75 percent, effectively a 25 percent penalty that can easily run into millions of dollars. The provision isn't meant to stymie recovery. In fact, FEMA rules recognize that communities may opt legitimately not to rebuild what a storm destroyed, deciding instead for improvements that make better use of resources or reduce potential damage. But FEMA also is wary of letting communities use disasters as opportunities to make improvements at federal taxpayer expense that they wouldn't normally pay for on their own.