

BRIEFING PAPER



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Southern Region

Date: August 31, 2008
7 p.m.

Topic: Hurricane Preparations

Issue: With Hurricane Gustav (Category 3) in the Gulf of Mexico, Tropical Storm Hannah in the Atlantic Ocean, and other tropical cyclones developing, the Southern Region is continuing to work with partners throughout the Southern Area to ensure readiness and coordinated emergency response when landfall occurs. Tropical storm force winds are expected to be on the coasts of Alabama and Mississippi around noon on Monday, September 1, and Hurricane Gustav is scheduled to make landfall on the Louisiana coast early on Tuesday, September 2.

Background: The Southern Region was heavily impacted and greatly involved in Federal emergency response efforts during the 2005 hurricane season. Experience gained and lessons learned during that record-breaking season are guiding current preparations.

Current Situation: Region 8 Operations has a small command staff working through the Southern Area Coordination Center in Atlanta. The team is identifying available resources and developing strategies regarding response and resource pre-positioning based upon storm developments. Activities include **(new items are in bold)**:

- **The Southern Area moved up from Planning Level 2 to Planning Level 4, as multiple teams are staging in the Area and multiple sites may be impacted.**
- Representatives are supporting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with Emergency Support Function (ESF)-4 positions throughout the Southeast, including Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia.
- **Two National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams have pre-positioned in Texas. A third NIMO team will pre-position in Atlanta on Monday.**
- Forest Service aviation personnel are working as ramp managers at evacuee centers in Tennessee and Kentucky.
- **The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) is providing air transportation to move FEMA command staff from California to establish a Joint Field Office (JFO) in the Southeast near the impacted area.**
- All State and Federal land management agencies in the Southern Area, along with Incident Commanders of in-region Incident Management Teams (IMTs), are participating in daily coordination calls.
- **The Southern Area's two Type-1 IMTs and one Type-2 IMT will be pre-positioning in Atlanta on Monday and Tuesday.**

- **Ten 20-person crews with sawyers are pre-positioning in Atlanta, and four 20-person crews with sawyers are pre-positioning in Texas.**
- National Forests in the likely path of the storms are implementing hurricane preparedness plans, including pre-positioning of crews, fuel and equipment.
- **As a safety precaution, the four National Forests in Texas have been closed, including all campgrounds.**
- **The Southern Region of the U.S. Forest Service has temporarily waived fees at overnight camping facilities for hurricane evacuees and their families and rescue and recovery workers.**
- **Resource mobilization centers will be established in Atlanta and Dallas on Monday and Tuesday. These centers will coordinate people and equipment pre-positioned for response, provide transportation to assignments, and help obtain supplies. (Resources deployed into affected areas are expected to be self-sufficient for 72 hours.)**
- Two Hurricane Cache Vans (72-hour supply trailers for IMTs) are pre-positioned near likely strike zones.
- The Southern Region has identified a point-of-contact for incident information and rapid assessment information. Stephanie Neal Johnson is serving as the incident information contact; John Greis will report to Atlanta on Tuesday to coordinate rapid assessment information.