



# Homeland Security

The Honorable Kathleen Blanco  
Governor of Louisiana  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9004

Dear Governor Blanco:

I appreciate the opportunity to have met with you on April 17, 2006, and on May 30, 2006, to discuss our respective responsibilities for preparedness and response planning for the 2006 hurricane season. As a result of our experiences during the 2005 hurricane season and the lessons learned from the response, we are more prepared than ever as a Nation to confront a major hurricane. Through a strong working relationship and our agreement to coordinate and plan effectively for this current hurricane season, Louisiana will be able to provide help and assistance to its citizens.

This letter identifies our primary areas of coordination and cooperation as well as remaining areas of concern. To incorporate fully the lessons learned from the catastrophic 2005 hurricane season, it is critical that we establish a mutual understanding of the respective responsibilities of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State of Louisiana. As a general matter, emergency management is primarily a State and local responsibility. The Stafford Act, which requires that the Federal Government act in support of a State in response to its needs, embodies this concept of federalism. However, because of the extensive devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina and the persisting vulnerabilities throughout Southeastern Louisiana, the Federal Government stands ready to meet your requests and actively assist you at an unprecedented level in hurricane preparedness and response operations.

The State of Louisiana continues to make commendable progress in preparedness, and I am pleased that we are moving forward as partners to address the key issue of early and organized evacuation, including the identification of shelters for all evacuees, particularly those with special needs. DHS is committed to assist the State of Louisiana as you continue to refine your evacuation plans. Likewise, our response planners from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other Federal agencies will continue to work with your staff to finalize plans for the positioning of Federal response assets and commodities in the region. In this regard, I have reviewed the letter of Colonel Jeff Smith to Chief David Paulison, dated May 26, 2006, setting forth the State's specific requests for Federal assistance. To ensure that we share a common approach to our respective roles and responsibilities, I outline in this letter our understanding of hurricane preparedness, including our arrangements to address items set forth in Colonel Smith's

letter. Given the onset of the 2006 hurricane season, I ask that you carefully review the following and provide any additional perspective on behalf of the State by Wednesday, July 26, 2006.

### **Declarations**

Given the unique challenges of the 2006 hurricane season, FEMA released an Interim Recovery Policy (IRP) for Hurricane/Typhoon Pre-Landfall Declaration Requests on June 1, 2006 (Enclosure 1). As you know, in rare circumstances, the President may declare an emergency under the Stafford Act prior to a hurricane's landfall. However, a State governor's emergency declaration is normally a prerequisite to Presidential action. We released the IRP to clarify and facilitate the declaration request process and expect it to be useful this season.

### **Command and Control**

The National Response Plan, which was updated in May 2006, provides the overarching plan for Federal disaster response operations. This plan codifies a new command and control structure for the Federal and State decision-making process related to disaster management. For the 2006 hurricane season, and as required, Gil Jamieson will serve as the regional Gulf Coast Principal Federal Official (PFO). He will be my direct representative in the field and will be available to you as your primary point of contact. Both Gil Jamieson and the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) for Louisiana will be located at the Joint Field Office (JFO) in Baton Rouge. If circumstances warrant, we will likely also deploy a second FCO closer to the affected area. I have pre-designated Ted Monette and Lee Champagne as FCOs for Louisiana.

The FCO will be the State Coordinating Officer's (SCO) primary point of contact for Federal resource support. The JFO, at Baton Rouge, will provide a venue to bring all of these officials together – the PFO, FCO, SCO and other Federal and State officials – in the form of a JFO Coordination Group. The purpose of this group is to establish priorities and allocate Federal resources in support of the State for disaster response.

Please identify to Gil Jamieson the person whom the State plans to designate as the SCO and Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) for this hurricane season. The close coordination between the SCO, the GAR, the FCO, and the PFO will be an essential element in achieving unified incident management.

### **Evacuation Decisions and Timing**

State and local governments – not the Federal Government – have the legal authority and responsibility to order and conduct voluntary or mandatory evacuations of their citizens. Once an evacuation is ordered, the State has two key responsibilities: (1) facilitating the evacuation of those citizens who can evacuate on their own, and (2) providing the means of evacuation for those who cannot. You have informed DHS that for the 2006 hurricane season, the State is unable, without Federal support, to evacuate all those who cannot evacuate themselves. As such, we are prepared to provide that support. But we cannot do so effectively without your close cooperation and assistance.

As we understand State law, each parish president in Louisiana may order a voluntary or mandatory evacuation of his or her parish, and the Governor may order a voluntary or mandatory evacuation of any parish in the State. The timing of voluntary and mandatory evacuation orders is pivotal to a successful evacuation. I recognize the difficulty of this decision for State and local officials given an evacuation's heavy impact on the populace and economy. Nonetheless, early evacuation orders save lives and maximize the chances that subsequent State and Federal response efforts will be successful.

If the order to evacuate is not given in time, the ability of Federal resources to assist will degrade at an accelerating rate with each hour that passes. For that reason, the State and the parish governments will need to order voluntary and mandatory evacuations of Southeastern Louisiana at a time that leaves sufficient opportunity to execute the steps the Federal Government is expected to perform.

As you know, each storm presents unique circumstances that will require discussion among Federal, State, and parish officials. We propose to establish a mutually agreed-upon timeline for meetings to occur when a hurricane or tropical storm threatens. At those meetings, your evacuation decisions can be made based on the conditions presented by the specific storm and with a full understanding of the time we need to complete the steps you have requested we undertake in an evacuation.

This mutually agreed-upon timeframe should ensure that the appropriate course of action and decisions are discussed and understood to facilitate Louisiana residents' timely evacuation. This was a central issue discussed by our respective planning staffs and other Federal and State representatives in a meeting held the week of July 10, in Baton Rouge. I must emphasize that without a timely order for evacuation, we cannot deploy Federal resources in time to assist the State in evacuating those who cannot evacuate themselves.

#### **Transportation During Evacuation**

As noted above, when a State orders the voluntary or mandatory evacuation of its citizens, the State bears the responsibility for assisting those citizens who cannot evacuate by their own means. You have indicated that Federal assistance is required for the State to fulfill this responsibility. Given the unique circumstances faced by the State this hurricane season, the Federal Government will provide this assistance. Evacuation of citizens with special medical needs is addressed in a separate section below.

We have estimated that as many as 96,000 persons in the general population of Louisiana may be unable to evacuate by their own means. To augment State resources, the Federal Government has established an interagency Transportation Management Unit at the Baton Rouge JFO to coordinate the routing of buses and to determine the most effective balance between air, rail, and bus evacuation. We encourage the State to co-locate their movement coordination staff with the Transportation Management Unit at the Baton Rouge JFO. This will help to ensure effective integration and management of all transportation assets.

The Federal Government has also entered into contracts for the transportation of as many as 80,000 persons by bus and 46,000 persons by air. Additionally, the Federal Government has entered into a standby agreement for the evacuation of 15,000 persons by passenger rail. Although we do not anticipate the need to evacuate this many people in a single event, we have assumed such a worst-case scenario for planning purposes and have made arrangements accordingly.

I understand the State has agreed to work with each parish to provide transportation to pre-identified collection points within each parish for those citizens who lack the means to evacuate themselves. Accordingly, the Federal Government has agreed to provide transportation from those pre-established collection points either to shelters, rail sites, or air transportation sites. Given this arrangement, the effectiveness of Federal assistance is predicated on the parishes and the State transporting those persons needing evacuation assistance to the collection points in a timely and organized fashion.

We understand you have already provided a list of collection points for the 2006 hurricane season to Gil Jamieson. FEMA continues to work with the American Red Cross and the State to identify additional collection points in Louisiana. This list is constantly being updated; however, any additions or revisions to the list should be provided to Gil Jamieson by July 26, 2006. We will assume that the list in Mr. Jamieson's possession on July 26 is the final list of collection points.

Finally, in order to facilitate the use of rail assets for evacuation, the State must ensure that all levee boards have coordinated their work schedule for covering rail tracks with gravel according to the evacuation timetable. If the task is not completed in a timely fashion, rail tracks will be unavailable for use during an evacuation.

#### **Sheltering for the General Population**

Sheltering operations, especially in the face of major storms that displace thousands of people, are typically undertaken by the State in conjunction with non-governmental organizations such as the American Red Cross, often with the support of the Federal Government. In anticipation of the 2006 hurricane season, we have worked with the State to estimate your shelter requirements, including a worst-case disaster scenario that would require the use of high number of shelters across the State.

In response to a State request, a multi-agency Federal team, in coordination with State agencies and the American Red Cross, has been working to expand State shelter capacity by identifying new sites and securing commitments to manage, staff, supply, and secure them in advance of a serious storm. In order to speed this process and focus our efforts, DHS sent a team of senior FEMA officials to the Baton Rouge JFO to establish an interagency Shelter Management Unit to work specifically on identifying shelters. Thus far, our joint efforts have confirmed available shelter space for 78,800 persons – and identified potentially available shelter space for another 75,000 persons – in the State of Louisiana.

For the remaining persons, assuming a worst-case scenario, we have taken extraordinary steps to make arrangements with other States on your behalf to shelter those individuals. However, we cannot fairly ask other States to assume the responsibility of sheltering Louisiana evacuees until Louisiana itself has reasonably exhausted its internal resources. For that reason, I want to emphasize that the aforementioned 75,000 potential shelter spaces consist of many facilities previously identified by the State and by parish governments for the 2005 hurricane season. Not all of these shelter spaces are currently designated by the State and local officials as available this year. Since these shelter spaces were available last year, we presume that their absence from this year's list is a reflection of local preference. Accordingly, as we have discussed, I am relying on your assurance that you will use all powers and authorities you have as Governor to ensure State and parish governments will provide all available shelter space in Louisiana before we turn to other States for shelter.

The Federal Government is basing its resource allocation planning efforts on the list of designated shelters provided to FEMA by State officials on June 6, 2006. As FEMA continues its work with the American Red Cross and the State of Louisiana in identifying additional shelter locations in Louisiana, this list is being updated. The Federal Government cannot adequately support the State's sheltering plans without a current and comprehensive list. Therefore, it is essential that the State's list is exhaustive and has been coordinated with local officials, especially officials in the City of New Orleans. Please provide any last additions to this list to Gil Jamieson by July 26, 2006.

#### **Special Medical Needs – Evacuation, Transportation, and Sheltering**

The State bears a particular responsibility for the evacuation, transportation, and sheltering of its citizens with special medical needs. In order to avoid the problems with special medical needs evacuation, transportation, and sheltering that arose during the 2005 hurricane season, the Federal Government will continue to provide assistance to the State in support of these populations for the 2006 hurricane season. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has conducted a comprehensive census of all nursing homes in Southeastern Louisiana to determine the adequacy of their evacuation plans and the number of persons with special needs who may need special shelter and transportation assistance. The results of this assessment have been provided to Dr. Frederick Cerise, Secretary of Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals.

Federal Medical Stations will be set up to care for evacuees upon arrival at special needs shelters, and National Disaster Medical System field medical facilities will be available to provide care for evacuees. However, military and other Federal resources do not have unlimited capacity to transport those hospital patients who may be in a critical stage of care. Hence, persons in hospitals will need to be safely sheltered-in-place to the greatest degree possible. It is essential that we bring greater focus to the assessments that must be undertaken to identify the capacity of hospitals to shelter-in-place and to ensure that this capability satisfies the requirement to provide for the safety of those persons in a state of critical care.

To enable the Federal Government to determine the standby logistical services required to evacuate, transport, and shelter persons with special medical needs, the State must use its legal authority to do the following:

- Complete, in conjunction with HHS, a comprehensive inventory of all hospitals to assess their potential to support a shelter-in-place capability. To the extent that surveys are being conducted by entities other than HHS, such as the Louisiana Hospitals Association, the State must facilitate full access and cooperation between such entities and HHS;
- Certify that the State has reviewed the required evacuation plans for nursing homes and critical care facilities and confirm these facilities have made suitable arrangements for the evacuation or shelter-in-place of their special needs populations for each category of storm;
- Confirm that there are sufficient governmental or privately-owned ambulances and other forms of requisite transportation available to meet the aggregate requirements; and
- Provide an accurate count, by facility, of the number of persons with special medical needs for whom Federal assistance will be required in evacuation, transportation, sheltering, or sheltering-in-place. Please provide this list to Gil Jamieson by July 26, 2006.

### **Commodities Pre-Staging**

States are primarily responsible for stockpiling commodities to support the anticipated needs of its citizens. However, for the 2006 hurricane season, the Federal Government has staged unprecedented quantities of commodities in the Gulf Coast region and implemented an asset visibility system to track the quantities and locations of commodities in real time.

### **Communications**

Both the operability and interoperability of public safety communications systems in Louisiana presented problems during the 2005 hurricane season. We understand that the planned upgrade of public safety communications systems in Southeastern Louisiana will not be completed in time for the 2006 hurricane season; therefore, the State and the Federal Government will divide responsibility with respect to public safety communications support as follows:

- Each entity that owns and operates a public safety communications system – City, parish, or State government – is responsible for ensuring the survivability and basic operability of its system.
- Since the best communications system in the wake of a disaster is the system that was in place prior to the disaster, each entity owning and operating a public safety communications system should have agreements and plans in place with manufacturers and service providers to provide needed restoration services for these networks as well as the electrical generation and transmission facilities that power them. The State should assume responsibility for ensuring that repair crews have access to damaged facilities in order to perform restoration work.
- In the event that a public safety communication system cannot be restored in a timely manner, the Federal Government will pre-stage communications vehicles

from the FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) detachments and caches of land mobile radios for distribution to public safety providers. The SCO should submit requests for these assets to the Baton Rouge JFO.

- Since the State interoperable public safety communications system will not be completed in time for the 2006 hurricane season, the Federal Government will stage interoperable communications bridging equipment from the National Guard, FEMA, and the National Communications System. The SCO should submit requests for these assets to the Baton Rouge JFO.
- The Federal Government has catalogued and will broadly disseminate radio frequencies that Federal responders will use during a response in Louisiana.

### **Public Communications and Outreach**

An integrated and comprehensive strategic communication effort led by the State, and supported by local and Federal authorities, is necessary to ensure that individuals understand how to prepare for an emergency and determine where to go, what to take, and how to connect with family and friends during an emergency. DHS is supporting this effort nationally through our *Ready* Campaign. The State has also initiated important communication activities, yet additional coordinated activities are necessary to enhance awareness and understanding of Louisiana residents, particularly those with special medical and transportation needs. Our respective public communications staffs began coordinating the week of July 10 to begin an intensive five-week public outreach program. As the State further develops its communications programs, it will be especially important to use its public health authority to educate citizens about steps they should take to evacuate infirm and elderly family members.

### **National Guard and Law Enforcement**

It is important that we have a clear understanding of the available resources and process for initiating Federal support of State efforts to maintain civil order and prevent unrest. As you know, the State is principally responsible for activating the National Guard and for maintaining civil order. My understanding is that the State of Louisiana will be activating 3,500 Louisiana National Guard troops for Southeast Louisiana for the 2006 hurricane season, and that these troops will be staged in New Orleans prior to the initiation of any evacuation. Moreover, the State has identified 2,000 National Guard troops from other States with required technical specialties, and has made arrangements to deploy those troops through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process.

The Federal Government will also have civilian law enforcement support available. Requests for law enforcement support should be transmitted through the SCO to the Baton Rouge JFO. The Secretary of Homeland Security may request that the Attorney General designate a Senior Federal Law Enforcement Official (SFLEO) to join the Federal unified command at the Baton Rouge JFO. Federal law enforcement personnel assigned to the incident will be deputized by the U.S. Marshals Service and have broad Federal law enforcement authority. If assistance is required in enforcing State or local laws, the State will need to deputize these officers as well. I request that you coordinate with Gil Jamieson in developing a suitable deputization plan.

**Recovery**

The President is committed to helping the entire Gulf Coast rebuild and recover from the damage inflicted by the 2005 hurricane season, a commitment that extends especially to the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans. Demonstrating this commitment, Congress has approved the President's requests for additional disaster recovery funding, and the amount made available to Louisiana will ultimately be the most ever given to a single state in our Nation's history.

For this year's hurricane season, the Federal Government has taken a number of steps to make the recovery process easier and more streamlined. FEMA has pre-staged a greater number of manufactured homes and travel trailers than were available last year and has created special mobile teams to facilitate registering individuals in shelters for individual and household assistance. Requests for technical assistance and additional registration capacity should be made by the SCO through the Baton Rouge JFO. In addition, FEMA has amended its administrative rules concerning debris removal to eliminate the cost-share distinction between debris removal conducted through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and private contractors engaged by the State or local governments.

FEMA has also developed a registry of approximately 250 debris removal contractors that is available to State and local officials. The purpose of this registry is to streamline the identification and use of contractors in removing post-event debris. We recommend that you encourage the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to engage with other State agencies and parish officials to ensure that debris contractors who have performed well during past events are added to this registry. These efforts to populate the registry will help ensure that State and local economic interests are considered through the future use of in-state resources.


**Conclusion**

In closing, I am encouraged by the important progress the State of Louisiana continues to make on many preparedness fronts, and I am pleased that we are working closely as partners. The heart of the hurricane season begins in August, and it is critical that we address outstanding preparedness issues in your State before then. I want to highlight again the need for us to establish a mutually agreed-upon timeline for meetings in advance of any anticipated tropical storm or hurricane landfall. These meetings will enable us to execute effectively our evacuation plans and synchronize our planning estimates of the populations needing evacuation assistance.

Furthermore, I urge the State to provide us with the most current and comprehensive list of transportation collection points and identified shelters, and that the State, working with the Federal Government, conclude all preparedness and planning efforts relating to the evacuation of persons with special medical needs as soon as possible. By accomplishing

these key steps, we will be in a far better position to partner with you to provide help to the citizens of Louisiana when they need it the most.

Sincerely,



Michael Chertoff

Enclosure

cc: R. David Paulison, Director, FEMA  
Gil H. Jamieson, Deputy Director for Gulf Coast Recovery/Principal Federal Official  
P. Jeff Smith, Acting Director, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and  
Emergency Preparedness  
The Honorable Ray Nagin, Mayor, City of New Orleans  
Parish presidents in Southeastern Louisiana  
The Honorable Mike Danahay, President, Calcasieu Parish  
The Honorable Douaine Conner, President, Cameron Parish  
The Honorable Will Langlinais, President, Iberia Parish  
The Honorable Aaron F. Broussard, President, Jefferson Parish  
The Honorable Charlotte Randolph, President, Lafourche Parish  
The Honorable Benny Roussell, President, Plaquemines Parish  
The Honorable Henry Rodriguez, President, St. Bernard Parish  
The Honorable Paul P. Naquin, Jr., President, St. Mary Parish  
The Honorable Kevin C. Davis, President, St. Tammany Parish  
The Honorable Donald Schwab, President, Terrebonne Parish  
The Honorable Mark Poche, President, Vermilion Parish