



# Disaster Preparedness Newsletter

## October, 2008

Volume 1, Number 2

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### Join Our List

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### Family Disaster Kit

*After a disaster, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in a few hours, or it may take days. Would your family be prepared to cope with the emergency until help arrives? Here is how to create a Family Disaster Kit.*



- **Water.** Store at least 1 gallon per day per person and a 3-day supply.
- **Food.** Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.
- **First Aid Kit.** Include standard items and non-prescription drugs.
- **Tools and Supplies.** Include the following:
 

Paper cups, plastic utensils, plates	Paper and pencils, pens
Emergency Preparedness Manual	Needles and thread
Battery or Hand Crank Radio, batteries	Tent
Flashlight, extra batteries	Whistle
Cash and traveler's checks	Map of area and state
Manual can opener, utility knife	Toilet paper, towelettes
Fire extinguisher - ABC type	Soap, liquid detergent
Wrench to turn off gas and water	Feminine supplies
Pliers, hammer, screwdrivers	Personal hygiene items
Plastic garbage bags and ties	Tape
Plastic storage containers	Plastic bucket with lid
Matches	Disinfectant
Aluminum foil	Household chlorine bleach
Signal Flare	Towels
Compass	Rope
Hammer, screwdrivers,	Insect repellent
Anti-bacterial, waterless hand wash	

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### Family Disaster Kit *Continued from Page 1*

- **Clothing and bedding.** *Include these:*
  - Sturdy shoes or work boots
  - Rain gear
  - Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows
  - Hat, coat, and gloves
  - Thermal underwear
  - Sunglasses
- **Special items for babies.** *Include these:*
  - Formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk, medications.
- **Special items for elderly.** *Include these:*
  - Prescription and non-prescription medications
  - Denture needs
  - Contact lenses and supplies
  - Eye glasses
- **Entertainment.** *Include games and books.*
- **Important family documents.** *Store in a waterproof, portable container. Include the following:*
  - Will or trust, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds
  - Passports, social security cards, immunization records
  - Bank account numbers
  - User names and passwords
  - Credit card account numbers and companies
  - Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
  - Family records: birth, marriage, death certificates
  - Vehicle titles

### Tornado Watches and Warnings *What is the difference?*



**Tornado watch** means that conditions are favorable for producing a particular weather

event, but that it has not formed yet. Watches alert the public that they need to pay closer attention than usual to the weather, just to be safe. A tornado watch is issued when atmospheric conditions could cause tornadoes to form, although none have formed yet.



**Tornado warning** means that a particular weather event has formed and that it threatens the area under the warning. A

tornado warning means that a tornado is actually present and moving in the warn vicinity. Residents should take immediate shelter in a tornado warning.

**Stay alert to the sky. Besides an obviously visible tornado, look and listen for these tornado signs:**

1. Day or night- loud rumble which does not diminish after a few seconds. Like the sound of a freight train.
2. Strong visual rotation in the cloud base.
3. Whirling dust or debris under a cloud. Some tornadoes have no funnel.
4. Hail or heavy wind, followed by either dead calm or fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes are in heavy rain and can't be seen.
5. At night- small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm. This means that power lines are being snapped, perhaps by a tornado.
6. At night- persistant lowering of the cloud base, illuminated or silhouetted by lightning.

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### Upcoming October Events

#### *Federal and State Disaster Preparedness Events*

**October 7, 2008 - Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii**

**The Science of Communications: Connecting Researchers & Practitioners**

**A workshop for risk and crisis communicators**

This workshop will bring researchers and practitioners together to discuss the science behind how people react to communications in high risk and crisis situations. This workshop is being held in conjunction with the 2008 Asia-Pacific Homeland Security Summit & Exposition, Oct. 8-10, 2008. For more information, go to

<http://www.nagconline.org/AboutNAGC/Docs/ScienceofCommunicationsAgenda071808.pdf>

**October 8-9, 2008 - New Orleans, LA**

**Emergency Preparedness, Response & Recovery Conference**

**Homeland Defense Journal Training**

The Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Conference will cover all aspects of emergency management planning and response for communities, agencies and organizations. This conference will bring together national, state and local experts and practitioners to discuss the full spectrum of a disaster and the impact on a community or an organization. For more information, go to:

<http://www.homelanddefensejournal.com/hdl/Emergency-Preparedness-Response-Recovery.html>

**October 9, 2008 - University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN**

**Webinar: The Big 7 Pandemic-Planning Mistakes**

**12:00-1:30 p.m. Eastern time:** The webinar features two internationally respected authorities in preparedness and risk communication, who will combine their years of expertise and integrity to equip you with the definitive "need-to-know" information in a lively interactive webinar. Widely known for their candor, vision, and drive for results, Michael T. Osterholm, PhD, MPH, and Peter M. Sandman, PhD, will fortify you with insights, energy, and real-world action steps.

Information: [http://online.krm.com/iebms/coe/coe\\_p2\\_details.aspx?oc=10&cc=00279763&eventid=13937](http://online.krm.com/iebms/coe/coe_p2_details.aspx?oc=10&cc=00279763&eventid=13937)

**October 13-16, 2008 - Palm Springs, CA**

**California Emergency Services Association (CESA) 2008 Annual Conference**

**"Adventures in Emergency Management: The Quest for Success"**

**Hilton Palm Springs Resort**

The California Emergency Services Association (CESA) 2008 Annual Conference will focus on best practices and lessons learned from actual emergencies, with an emphasis on practical applications. For more information, go to

<http://www.cesa.net/conferences.cfm?color=st>

**October 27-28, 2008 - Washington, DC**

**Altered Standards of Care & Surge Capacity Conference:**

**Mass Casualty Management in Times of Crisis**

This conference will bring together an influential gathering of medical and public health leaders to teach preparedness planners at the federal, state, regional, community, and health systems levels how to plan and support surge capacity in healthcare systems and develop altered standards of care to meet mass casualty needs during all-hazard and hazard-specific emergencies. At this conference, best practices for preparedness will be highlighted for disasters, acts of terrorism, and pandemic diseases. Information: <http://www.governmenthorizons.org/SurgeCapacityConference/>

*For information about "Disaster Preparedness Newsletter" contact John Trifiletti at [DisasterPrepare@yahoo.com](mailto:DisasterPrepare@yahoo.com)*

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### Special Needs Shelters

#### *Key Component of Public Health Response to Hurricanes*

Special needs shelters provide a location to house individuals that typically have physical or mental conditions that require limited medical/nursing oversight. Because of their condition, special needs individuals need to be sustained with more medical resources and individual care than can be provided in a general shelter (i.e., shelters operated by the Red Cross and other volunteer organizations.) The provision of special needs shelters also reduces surge demands on hospitals where, in times of emergencies, services and care are demanded by other needs and patients.

In Florida, in 2004, health department staff pre-registered and identified individuals to be placed in special needs shelters well before the hurricanes. Each county health department was responsible for defining “special needs individuals” in their communities. These descriptions were created in conjunction with the local hospitals, local nursing homes, emergency responders, and members of the community. The process allowed for jurisdictional flexibility in identifying existing health resources and matching them to the requirements of the special needs community. In Alabama, plans called for special needs patients to be sheltered in schools in the Mobile area and in hospitals in the remainder of the state.

In the aftermath of the storms, several key lessons emerged in regard to the sheltering of special needs populations:

- Define special needs communities
- Conduct pre-event planning with community partners
- Coordinate with agencies caring for patients with special needs
- Incorporate special needs populations in emergency management plans and exercise those plans
- Prepare and distribute educational materials
- Identify available resources to support the shelter
- Design plans to allow for maximum flexibility



*Escambia County, FL Social Needs Shelter*

Special needs shelters are a crucial public service provided during emergencies and should be included in public health preparedness planning. State and local disaster plans can be strengthened by addressing the ability to rapidly establish and maintain these shelters in an emergency. This type of planning can prevent or minimize potential problems that may arise in the midst of an event. Ultimately, this will also allow for resources to be allocated and maximized during an event, so that response efforts to be concentrated elsewhere.

### Additional Resources:

Florida State Department of Health Public Health Nursing Disaster Resource Guide:

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/phnursing/sns/disasterguide.html>

Georgia Division of Public Health: Care of Special Needs Populations in Disasters and Emergencies:

<http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/nursing/specialneeds.02.pdf>

An ADA Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/emergencyprep.htm>

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### Types of Disasters - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- **Chemical Emergencies** Nearly every household uses products containing hazardous materials or chemicals.
- **Dam Failures** There are 79,500 dams in the United States, according to the 2005 update to the National Inventory of Dams. Approximately one third of these pose a “high” or “significant” hazard to life and property if failure occurs.
- **Earthquakes** Earthquakes strike suddenly, violently, and without warning at any time of the day or night.
- **Fires or Wildfire** The threat of wildland fires for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Dry conditions at various times of the year and in various parts of the United States greatly increase the potential for wildland fires.
- **Floods** Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states.
- **Hazardous Materials** Hazards can occur during production, storage, transportation, use, or disposal.
- **Heat** Heat kills by pushing the human body beyond its limits. In extreme heat and high humidity, evaporation is slowed and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature.
- **Hurricanes** As they move ashore, they bring with them a storm surge of ocean water along the coastline, high winds, tornadoes, torrential rains, and flooding.
- **Landslides** Landslides occur in all U.S. states and territories. In a landslide, masses of rock, earth, or debris move down a slope. Landslides may be small or large, slow or rapid.
- **Nuclear Power Plant Emergency** Nearly 3 million Americans live within 10 miles of an operating nuclear power plant.
- **Terrorism** Terrorist threats and activities have brought about large-scale losses of life, the destruction of property, widespread illness and injury, the displacement of large numbers of people, and devastating economic loss.
- **Thunderstorms** In the United States, an average of 300 people are injured and 80 people are killed each year by lightning. Flash floods caused by thunderstorms cause 140 deaths in the U.S. yearly.
- **Tornados** Tornadoes are nature’s most violent storms. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, tornadoes can cause fatalities and devastate a neighborhood in seconds.
- **Tsunami** A tsunami can move hundreds of miles per hour in the open ocean and smash into land with waves as high as 100 feet or more.
- **Volcanos** Eruptions can be quiet or explosive. There may be lava flows, flattened landscapes, poisonous gases, and flying rock and ash.
- **Wildfire** The threat of wildland fires for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Dry conditions at various times of the year and in various parts of the United States greatly increase the potential for wildland fires.
- **Winter Storms** Winter storms can result in flooding, storm surge, closed highways, blocked roads, downed power lines and hypothermia.

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### Hurricane Ike - Post 5 Days

*Eye Witness Report from Lex Frieden*

#### **September 17, 2008...Hurricane Ike post five days:**

We got power on at our home a little while ago. About half of our city is still without power, and folks from Galveston to Beaumont will be without power (and many of them without homes) for a long, long time. We lost a tree and a fence.

Amazingly, our cable and Internet access seems to have survived the storm without interruption - - or it was fixed before the power came back on here. Anyway, it is great to be able to charge your wheelchair in a place other than a hospital hallway or a grocery store shopping cart storage area. It will also be nice not to go on daily excursions in search of gasoline, ice and propane. Obviously, we followed directions and had our tank topped off before the storm hit.

My wife, Joyce, could be considered a kind of survivalist, so we were well stocked for this event. We have enough water remaining in bottles to keep us in good stead for about four more weeks. We have enough canned food and other non perishables to last us probably another six weeks. We have enough batteries to keep our radio going for about four more weeks - - but lanterns run batteries down really fast. We were just getting to the point that we had to go to bed before dark and get up at dawn. Now, thankfully I can resume my 7:00 AM to 1:00 AM normal schedule.

Our neighbor has a generator, but we want to avoid storing flammable liquids, so we do not keep gasoline to run a generator. We have been washing dishes and clothing the old fashioned way, and we have been boiling water and cooking our food on the gas grill out back. We conserve our batteries by listening to the radio about 3 hours per day.

I just stopped for a second writing this message to plug in the chargers for my wheelchair, cell phone, lanterns, radios and my electric razor. If the power goes out again tonight, I will be ready, again. I guarantee you I will not risk sleeping upstairs and possibly needing the elevator for a few

days. It will take me that long to reach for a light switch instead of a flashlight, and to close the doors and windows so that we are not air conditioning the outside.

During the last few days, I have been working with colleagues who were reachable by cell phone to organize recovery and relief efforts for people with disabilities. About 3,000 people with disabilities were evacuated prior to the storm, and most of them are in an Air Force Hospital in San Antonio. Many of them will not have a home to return to - - ever. Actually, we believe those people are being well cared for at this point. The people we are most concerned about are those young and old people with disabilities who were instructed to "shelter in place" by public authorities, and who stayed in their homes to weather the storm. Assuming they followed the instructions of the public authorities, they were prepared to survive using bottled water and nonperishable foods for three days. Many of them who have needs for power also were well stocked with batteries for an emergency.

Now, five days after the storm hit, most of those people have run out of water and food and batteries. If they try to call local emergency assistance numbers, like I did, they will likely get a busy signal, they will get put on hold indefinitely, they will get a person who tells them they have no relevant information, or they will be given a phone number, as I was, to an organization whose offices were destroyed by the storm. Calling FEMA will get them on a list for some kind of assistance later on, after they process the lists, but FEMA is unable to provide any local technical assistance information. Many people with disabilities, and probably others, are still in bad shape.

Interestingly, many of the people whom I have discovered need help are people who registered well before the storm on the 211 emergency assistance system. The system worked well for those people who lived in mandatory evacuation zones and who needed to be evacuated. I am not aware of anyone who was registered who was not

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### Hurricane Ike - Post 5 Days

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evacuated by one means or another. Our metropolitan transit authority paratransit system, along with our emergency preparedness officials, did a great job with this task. However, there are approximately 11,000 other people on the 211 list who sheltered in place who have yet to be called to check on their well being, and this is of great concern to me. These people expected help in these circumstances, and nobody has even called to check on most of them.

Last night I was able to locate a volunteer who filled a 5 gallon gasoline can to take to a woman who uses a ventilator. Her gasoline powered generator was about to run dry. She would have expired early this morning, if we have not found gasoline and a volunteer to deliver it to her. Red Cross offered no assistance to her, and neither did any other local aid agencies.

All of my colleagues at ILRU (the Independent Living Resource Utilization program at TIRR) have been about similar tasks -- trying to figure out how to help people who are in need. We are all reminded of the 3,000 plus calls for help that we answered and responded to after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I am currently trying to get funding to support an 800 line number and staffing to provide assistance to those people with disabilities who are trying to recover from this disaster. We would also like to have some funds to be able to assist people directly, by doing things like purchasing and delivering gasoline to them for their generators.

**Thanks for your prayers, Lex Frieden**  
**Professor of Health Informatics and Rehabilitation**  
**University of Texas at Houston [www.shis.uth.tmc.edu](http://www.shis.uth.tmc.edu)**  
**[www.disability911.org](http://www.disability911.org)**

Please consider helping us by contributing to the Disability Emergency Assistance Project at the following link:

<https://secure.imodules.com/s/751/index.aspx?sid=751&gid=1&pgid=339&cid=853>

### Hurricane Ike - Post 2 Weeks

**NOTE: September 27, 2008...Hurricane Ike post two weeks:** Since my first email was posted (September 17), thousands of people with disabilities have been assisted by the Harris County and Houston Offices of Emergency Management and by other public and private agencies in the region. Even so, thousands remain in need. This is one of many similar messages I got yesterday... "Lex, we have a patient on a ventilator that goes to McDonalds for 8 hours a day to charge her vent batteries. Where would we go to get her a generator?"

Though the national media has generally stopped covering the story of Hurricane Ike, many people in the affected region (including 29 Texas counties and part of Louisiana) are still without power, some homes are still without drinkable water, and thousands of young and old people with disabilities are trying to maintain their health and their independence in the face of the most challenging circumstances.

While other public and private agencies are trying to address the less complex needs of the general population, my colleagues and I are trying to address the specific needs of people with disabilities who were affected by Hurricane Ike. We are trying to obtain sponsorship for a three month project to contact and help people with severe impairments and disabilities who sheltered in place and whose independent living situation is at risk of being compromised by the storm's aftermath. Also, we aim to help find alternative housing and support services for people whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the storm and who otherwise might have to move into nursing homes or other institutional settings. We already have many commitments for in-kind support, but we need funding to support call center infrastructure costs, core staff and certain urgently needed supplies which may not be readily available in the inventories of donated items.

**Thanks, Lex Frieden**

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### Hurricane Gustav Statistics

*Weather.com - September 1, 2008*

The National Hurricane Center reported at 8 am CT that Hurricane Gustav has weakened to Category 2 storm.

The American Red Cross says 45,000 people are in its shelters. About 2 million people have been evacuated from Louisiana. FEMA has set up a registry to locate relatives. The phone number is 1-800-588-9822.

Based on data from offshore operator reports submitted today, personnel have been evacuated from 632 production platforms, equivalent to 88.2% of the 717 manned platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

Personnel from 110 rigs have also been evacuated; this is equivalent to 90.9% of the 121 rigs currently operating in the Gulf.

About 17 percent of electric customers in Louisiana are without power.

The Army Corps of Engineers says levees in New Orleans have survived Hurricane Gustav so far, but parts of southern Louisiana remain in grave danger. Some water did overlap the levee on Lake Pontchartrain near the city's Ninth Ward.

The U.S. Energy Department says a dozen refineries are shut down, representing 28 percent of the Gulf Coast capacity and approximately 12% of U.S.refining capacity. Another 10 refineries are operating at reduced levels.

*Storm Surge  
from Hurricane Gustav*



### American Red Cross Shelters



**American  
Red Cross**

**Food, shelter and emotional support** - providing these basic life-saving necessities to residents is the top priority of the Red Cross in the early days of this storm. The Red Cross is committed to keeping people as comfortable as possible until they are able to return home.

The Red Cross urges residents not to attempt to return home until officials tell you it is safe for you to go back. Even if the storm has passed through your area, there is still a danger. Flooded roads, downed power lines, debris - all are major hazards

If you or a loved one has evacuated, or is in a potentially affected area, register yourself on the Red Cross Safe and Well Website at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), or call a loved one and ask them to register you. The Red Cross provides this online tool to help families and individuals notify loved ones that they are safe during an emergency, which can help bring peace of mind in challenging times.

You can help people affected by thousands of disasters across the country each year, disasters like the Hurricanes of 2008, by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. We use this fund to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to victims of disasters who need our help.

**Donors can go online to  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)  
or call  
1-800-REDCROSS.**

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### Avoiding Disaster Fraud and Scams - ScamBusters.org

*Don't get taken for a ride!*



*Whenever there is a natural disaster, a great deal of fraudulent activities can be identified. Here are some to watch for and avoid:*

- 1. Phishing scams:** Many fraudulent websites have already been set up pretending to be legitimate Hurricane Gustav relief organizations. These sites request charitable donations, but in fact steal financial information and may be used for identity theft as well. Contributions, of course, go into the pockets of the scammers rather than to help people who desperately need it.
- 2. Viruses and trojans:** Spam is sent that includes photos of disaster areas or individual survivors, and these attachments contain computer viruses. For example, the Trojan, Cgab, is now related to a Hurricane Katrina email that is making the rounds. It provides full access to the victim's PC. According to CNN Money, the email headlines include: "Tropical storm flooded New Orleans" and "80 percent of our city underwater."
- 3. Variants of the Nigerian fee scam:** Unsolicited email (spam) is sent with the supposed purpose of retrieving large amounts of money tied up in areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. We were surprised that it took over a week to start seeing these scams.
- 4. Investment and security scams:** According to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), emails are making the rounds that tout specific stocks on the basis of activity related to Hurricane Katrina. For example, one email says that investors could more than double their money in just days on certain penny stocks because of "refinery glitches."
- 5. Misleading emails trying to take advantage of the disaster to sell unrelated products.**
- 6. Requests for individual donations to help their family members:** The first spam message we saw of this type had two different spellings of the scammer's first name!
- 7. Hate websites:** Sadly, a lot of hate websites are popping up that characterize the disaster as the "wrath of God" — and then they naturally ask people to donate to them.
- 8. Chain letters:** According to Anne Mitchell, the first email hoax was a request to forward the hoax because fifty cents would supposedly be donated to help victims for every copy of the email forwarded. A hidden embedded program then reported the e-mails to spammers. Spammers pay up to \$1 for each valid email address they can span!

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### Avoiding Disaster Fraud and Scams

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9. **Scammers posing as officials from government agencies, banks, insurance companies, credit card companies, etc.** These scammers are claiming they will help victims in some way (such as help process their insurance claims more quickly). However, the goal of these scams is to steal bank, credit card, and/or other personal information in order to steal money and sometimes commit identity theft. So far we're seeing this more offline than online, but it's only a matter of time until these scams become more prevalent online.
10. **Contractor scams.** Contractors (or people pretending to be contractors) are asking for money up front to do repair work, and then not showing up to do the work. Again, these scams are showing up more offline than online, but they, too, will become more prevalent online.
11. **Fee-based spam.** Unsolicited emails offer, for a fee, to locate loved ones who may be disaster victims.

### How to Avoid Getting Scammed

- Always use common sense. If it is too good to be true, it probably isn't true!
- Never respond to an email request for a donation — there is almost a 100% chance that it is a scam. (The only exception is that we hear that the American Red Cross does occasionally use email to solicit prior contributors. So if you have previously contributed to the American Red Cross, there is a small chance that a donation request email you receive may be legitimate.) In any case, NEVER click on a link in the email. Instead, type in the URL of the organization you wish to donate to. (See the resources below for a list.)
- Check to make sure any charity is legitimate before contributing.
- Do not open attachments (including supposed pictures of disaster areas) — they may well include viruses.
- Never give personal information such as your bank account numbers, social security number, or passwords to anyone requesting this information over the internet, by phone, or through email.



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### Hurricane Ike Statistics

*September 19, 2008*

Hurricane Ike hit Galveston, TX with 110 mph winds, and 13.5 ft. storm surge. The hurricane, almost as large as Texas itself, affected 500 miles of coastline in Texas and Louisiana. Galveston is the first U.S. city to take a direct hit from a hurricane since 2005.

The American Red Cross says 200 shelters were opened in several states, and 100,000 people were in shelters for overnight stays.

About 2 million people have been evacuated. On Sunday, September 15, 1,954 were rescued, 384 by air, literally plucked from their rooftops.

Based on data from Mineral Management Services, 49 of the 3,800 oil and gas platforms (1.2%) in the Gulf of Mexico were destroyed. Gasoline prices immediatly jumped by 35 cents per gallon.

The death count from Ike is at 55 deaths in 11 states.

Two million people were without power in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, including most of Galveston, Texas.

Texas has requested 50 billion dollars in Federal Aid to rebuild.

