



Informing the Public about Hazards **National Hurricane Program**

www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/nhp/index.shtm

Established in 1985, the National Hurricane Program (NHP) conducts assessments and provides tools and technical assistance to State and local agencies in developing hurricane evacuation plans. The program is a multi-agency partnership, involving the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association, the National Weather Service, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and numerous other Federal agencies. NHP receives \$5.86 million in annual funding, which consists of \$2.91 million for FEMA program activities and \$2.95 million for the Emergency Management Performance Grant program, which is directed into general State funds for hurricane preparedness and mitigation activities.

Planning for Safe and Effective Evacuations

The NHP conducts hurricane evacuation studies that guide the decision-making process for protecting the public when a hurricane threatens an area. These studies help State and local communities establish evacuation plans by determining the probable effects of a hurricane, predicting public response to the threat and advisories, and identifying appropriate shelters.

Specifically, the NHP conducts a hurricane surge analysis of all types of storms. The studies predict probable storm surge and wind effects, analyze the existing transportation system, assess shelter availability and capacity, use behavioral analysis to anticipate public reaction during evacuations, and calculate clearance times – the time required to evacuate the public before the arrival of gale force winds in areas affected by storm surge.

Based on these studies, the NHP provides targeted communities with recommendations for evacuation zones, which serve as a guide for determining where and when the public should be ordered to evacuate as a storm approaches. This recommendation is negotiated among decision-makers within each community. Once the evacuation zones are established, the NHP provides each community with corresponding evacuation maps and suggested clearance times for the various types of storm categories. The communities determine how to utilize these tools and recommendations in developing their evacuation plans.

Post-Storm Assessments

FEMA conducts post-storm assessments to determine how well the NHP tools and products have assisted State and local evacuation decision makers. This involves a hazard, transportation, and behavioral analysis of evacuations. FEMA analyzes the impacted evacuation roadway networks, storm surge basins, and evacuation clearance times that were applied to the response. The findings of this assessment are used to modify, as needed, the technical information that is the basis for State and local evacuation planning and operations. In preparation for the 2006 Hurricane Season, FEMA has been coordinating with the Gulf Coast Recovery Office in the development of evacuation planning guidance for the States and communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina. State and local evacuation plans have been modified to account for changes in both the demographics and infrastructure as a result of Hurricane Katrina.



Aiding Response and Recovery

The NHP provides States and communities with tools and products that assist in preparedness, response, and mitigation activities for hurricanes and other coastal storms.

During hurricane emergencies, Hurricane Liaison Teams (HLT) deploy to assist the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in communicating the latest forecast information to the emergency management community. The HLTs develop and disseminate information about the latest advisories from the NHC to Federal, State, and local emergency management agencies. In addition, FEMA Regional Hurricane Program Managers hold periodic conference calls with State and local officials to aid in the coordination of the evacuation operations between Regions, States, and communities. Because evacuation operations affect several States, interstate coordination is critical to avoid major traffic congestion.

After major storms, the NHP assesses the effectiveness of the Program's tools and products in assisting State and local decision makers during evacuations. The Post-Storm Assessments are the basis for refining and improving existing State and local hurricane response and evacuation plans. These assessments often identify new problem areas created by hurricane impacts and reveal shortfalls in operational decision making and resources. Post-Storm Assessments are a vital tool to capture perishable hurricane-related intelligence and are used to calibrate all tools and analysis guidelines developed through the Hurricane Evacuation Studies (HES). Such studies greatly enhance the impacted decision maker's capacity to respond to future land-falling tropical systems, as well as to provide the NHP with a mechanism to verify product results, usability, and data accuracy.