

## **Press Briefing on Hannah and Ike, Sept. 6, 2008 Transcript**

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Joe Becker, Vice President of Disaster Services, American Red Cross  
Erin Streeter, DHS Director of Ready.gov Campaign

ABBREVIATIONS: [U/I] = Unintelligible  
[PH] = Phonetic Spelling

### **Speaker**

### **Transcription**

*Operator:* ... on your touch-tone phone. Now I would like to turn the conference over to Debbie Wing.

*Debbie Wing:* Hi. Good afternoon and welcome everyone. Thanks for joining the September 6 FEMA news briefing regarding the federal updates to Hannah and preparations for Ike. We're going to kick it off with Mr. Glenn Cannon who is the FEMA Assistant Administrator for Disaster Operations. That's Glenn, G-L-E-N-N. Cannon, C-A-N-N-O-N. We'll then go to Gary Anderson who is

the FEMA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Logistics Management Directorate. Gary Anderson, G-A-R-Y, A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N. Then Mr. Joe Becker, who is the Senior Vice President of Disaster Services for the American Red Cross. Joe, J-O-E. Becker, B-E-C-K-E-R. And then finally we'll have Ms. Erin Streeter who is the Director of the Ready.gov campaign. And her spelling is E-R-I-N. Streeter, S-T-R-E-E-T-E-R. So I will go over to Mr. Glenn Cannon. Thank you.

*Glenn Cannon:* Thank you. Good afternoon. Just to speak about Hannah a little bit. Hannah, as you know, is coming up our eastern coast. We finished a conference with our states along the impacted area recently. There are no serious issues at any of the states reported. There have been some shelters open but very few people in the shelters. As an example, North Carolina had opened nine shelters and had only 26 total people in them.

There are concerns, of course, about some river flooding and some flash floods in low lying areas. The things that you would see traditionally in any heavy rain event. So, it is a heavy rain event with some gusts of winds but it's moving very quickly and it will move out into the Atlantic later today. So, no one, again, no one expressed any real problems except for some flooding in

low-lying areas. No one expressed any damage that they couldn't handle. Minor branches; some tree branches down on highways and so forth.

So, so far, we're monitoring Hannah but it seems to be a heavy rain event, which does not cause the states, at this point yet, a lot of difficulty.

Now onto Ike. We continue to prepare for Ike. The cone continues to shift more westerly, northwesterly within the Gulf although Florida is still within the cone of area or the cone of uncertainty you may have heard it referred to. When you see those hurricane forecasts, one thing that The Hurricane Center always stresses is don't pay attention just to that centerline. Look at that cone because those storms can deviate anywhere within those cones. And so right now, we still have Florida all the way over to almost Louisiana. And you can imagine, as today, in fact, we've been bringing significant folks back to Louisiana as a result of the Gustav evacuation and our planning and the impact of that storm continuing to shift is going to have on us.

We have all our resources pre-positioned right now for Ike as a

major, serious hurricane. And we will continue to shift and adjust resources as the storm shifts its course. And so that's our present situation related to Ike. We are in a very heavy planning activity right now for that storm. We are reconstituting things such as the National Ambulance Contract and we are repositioning our rescue responders as a result of it.

So, we're watching it. I would think that if it keeps in this direction in a day or so Florida will no longer be in harm's way. But we'll have to wait and see. We do a thing H minus 120 hours for hurricanes because there are a lot of things that have to happen within those five days. If you look across the Gulf we're going to be in H minus 120 tomorrow. So the storms are coming one right after another.

We did have a little bit of good news today. It looks like Josephine behind Ivan has broken apart. So that's good news. We're trying to rest our people today as much as possible, today and tomorrow, because we know that next week is going to be very, very busy for all of our folks. So that's the overview on Hannah and Ike and the good news on Josephine. And with that I'll pass it on.

*Debbie Wing:* Great. Thank you so much, Mr. Cannon. We will next go to Mr. Gary Anderson from the Logistics Management Division.

*Gary Anderson:* Good afternoon. As Glenn said, there is a concerted planning effort that is focused on Ike at this time, but I want to let you know that from the logistics community we are very, very much involved with support to the states, particularly support of Louisiana, working very closely with those people in seeking to provide a commodity support and other support that they are providing their citizens at this time.

We are also, at the same time, we are supporting, or are prepared to support, any of the logistics requirements that may come out of Hannah. We've been working very closely with the states. There are no identified shortfalls at this time, but we maintain that relationship so that should anything arise we would be able to respond. And then, of course, with Ike, we have taken a look at what we have seen and that FEMA has worked through the gap analysis that we worked on prior to the hurricane season. And, we have worked through those numbers again with our state counterparts so that we're sure that we're in sync with them and ready to support whatever requirements that they may need.

And, I just want to emphasize also that one of those critical requirements is providing meals, providing the MREs that are required. For example, for the state of Louisiana we had pre-positioned over 500,000 MREs in the state prior to Gustav in preparing for the hurricane season. We have provided to the state of Louisiana more than 4 million MREs and have an additional 3.5 million en route to Louisiana. That's the equivalent of feeding about 500,000 people for seven days or one million people for 3.5 days.

We see Louisiana doing what we believe is truly an amazing job caring for their citizens and we wanted to be there right beside them, partners in every way, so that we can be responsive to the needs of their citizens and satisfying their requirements. With that I will pass it back.

*Debbie Wing:* Thank you very much, Gary. Now we'll go to Joe Becker from the American Red Cross.

*Joe Becker:* Good afternoon. Thank you. And as Glenn was describing in Hannah, we're so happy that the response was only on the scale that actually materialized. We opened about 49 shelters, particularly in North and South Carolina, but actually had less

than 1,100 people in those shelters last night. And we're seeing pockets of flooding but nothing on the scale that we thought might be possible.

Moving forward to Ike, a lot of what you heard our partners in FEMA describe, for us it's all about people and supplies and equipment and getting them in the right places ahead of time. We use local Red Cross volunteers that are in communities and then we have a group of about 50,000 volunteers who will go anywhere in the country for us on about a half-day's notice and stay there for three weeks. And so our relief efforts are made up of a combination of both.

For example, what we're doing in Gustav so far, we've used about 8,900 workers and about two thirds of them have been local and about a third of them are traveling folks that we use. We have sent volunteers in from all 50 states and Puerto Rico to support those efforts. We need to pull the trigger early to move people in those kinds of numbers. And we have already deployed 800 to Florida for Ike and now we're needing to adjust that based on the storm track changing. But we can't wait till the last minute to send those folks in. So we need to do it days

before and sometimes we have to spread them over a pretty wide geography until that cone of error narrows and we know exactly where we need everybody.

Our supplies -- we've got 30 some odd warehouses around the country. That's about a million and a half square feet of space. And it's weighted by risk. And we've got warehouses all across the Gulf states. And we've been refilling those from further north warehouses in the last several days.

It's interesting, what's in our warehouses is not things like food and water and the things we give away. We use corporate supply chains for those. Those are donated to us or we buy them through companies. What we store are things like cots and blankets, toiletry kids, clean up items for kids, things that are longer lead-time items. We work very closely with corporations on the quick turn around items that we use to feed and shelter people.

And then lastly it's equipment. It's our communications equipment. It's our mobile feeding units, the trucks, and things like that. Two thirds of our fleet is in the Gulf now. It's been



responding to Gustav and as the fleet become available, we'll just make those available further east if that's where the storm ends up being. But we held all of our assets from the southeastern states, partly for Hannah and partly for what was becoming behind Hannah. So we've got a pretty good capability for Florida. We'll be able to move the Hannah assets over to the Gulf to take care of Ike when that comes. So, I think what's important for us to say is we're not pulling any resources from Louisiana to be ready for Ike. We're making sure that we're continuing that effort. We're going to be there for weeks and weeks to come. And unless the storm strikes there, which changes everything, we'll keep those folks intact and build new teams around them and the rest of the Gulf to take care of Ike.

If it has to hit anywhere we're grateful for the extra few days here that the Gulf hit might be giving us, but at any rate we'll make sure we've got the people and the supplies and the equipment and we feel like we'll be ready for Ike. Thank you.

*Debbie Wein:* Great. Thank you so much, Joe. Now we'll go to Erin Streeter from the Ready.gov.

*Erin Streeter:* Good afternoon everyone. The Ready Campaign is really focused on Ike and making sure that we're getting the individual

preparedness message out to residents in Florida as well as along the Gulf Coast region. What we're concerned about, as you've heard on the call, is that we don't have a path yet. So we do have a few days. So, we want to really be out there reminding residents that now's the time to make sure that they've got their emergency supply kit. They also should have a ToGo bag ready to go in case they need to evacuate very quickly. But also, we want to make sure that they've got an emergency plan in place. They know what the evacuation routes are in their community, what shelters are going to exist, if they should take pets or not. And making sure that they are taking some steps to prepare if they do have pets in their household.

Ironically, September is National Preparedness Month and so we're utilizing our 3,000 coalition members to also help us get the word out as they were promoting National Preparedness Month anyway. So, we're utilizing them to help us get this message out. I think that's it from my end.

*Debbie Wing:* Great. Thank you so much, Erin. And with that, Operator, we will now take questions.

*Operator:* Thank you. At this time if you would like to ask a question, please press star then one on a touch-tone phone. You will hear

a tone to confirm that you have entered the list. If you decide you want to withdraw your question, please press star then 2 to remove yourself from the list.

Our first question comes from Shevon Gorman[PH] from The Wall Street Journal. Please go ahead.

*Shevon Gorman:* Hi. I just wanted to get a little bit of an update in terms of the additional preparations you're making for Ike. Because there have been sort of passing references to Louisiana and kind of the impact on the Gulf. And so I'm just wondering as you're watching the storm pattern change, what your thinking is about the likelihood that it could strike not too far from where Gustav did. And how that affects your logistics planning.

*Glenn Cannon:* Well, I'm hesitating because you said logistics and I don't want to answer for Gary. When we talked, I think even yesterday we were still focusing on what was pretty much a Florida strike. But in the last 24 hours, looks like the track, is shifting more into the Gulf. And depending on some weather conditions that are related to high-pressure areas, it may be driven further south and then into the straights of Florida. Definitely the Keys will be impacted, but the real thing is, if it opens up then and it travels into the Gulf and then the only thing for sure we know at this

point, because the models are all in flux, is it's going to hit somewhere within the Gulf of Mexico.

So in the next day or so, we should see the Florida peninsula, if it keeps in this direction, the peninsula itself may be out of the cone of uncertainty or the cone of error. And then we will continue to shift resources, and I'll let Gary talk about logistics, but we will shift both logistics and response resources to be more properly aligned with the track of this storm and the potential impact areas.

So right now, it's a lot of monitoring. We have a lot of resources in place. But they were placed in locations that would not only deal with Hannah, but they would already be pre-placed to deal with Ike. And that's actually what's happening right now.

*Gary Anderson:* From a logistics perspective, what we have done is worked through our regions, particularly Region Four and Region Six and reached out to the states to have them revalidate what they believe now based on everything that they have used, expended or whatever to date to find out what their current capabilities are against what the requirements may be from an additional hurricane such as Ike.

So they have provided us those new numbers which we call the gap numbers. From what the state can do versus what they would need assistance with. Then we've gone out to each one of our partners with the General Services Administration, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with Defense Logistics Agency primarily to assess what they are doing, what their current capabilities may be, whatever contracts they may have to identify, reach out or amend, so that they can be thoroughly prepared again, just as we did throughout the Spring and early Summer, to get us prepared, working through gap analysis, using that process again with our partners so that we can assure the states that we will stand ready with them to assist them as they must meet the needs of their local citizens.

*Debbie Wein:* Thank you. Operator, we'll take the next question.

*Operator:* Again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star than one on your touch-tone phone.

Again, it is star one to ask a question.

Okay, at this time we have no questions.

*Debbie Wein:* Thank you everyone for joining us today. We'll keep you advised

through our advisory of our next briefing which will likely be tomorrow again at 3 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

(END OF AUDIO FILE)