

FEMA Press Briefing on Gustav

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PARTICIPANTS: Admiral Harvey Johnson, Deputy Administrator, FEMA
General Riley, United States Army Corps of Engineers
Major General Bill Etter, National Guard Bureau
Dr. Craig Vanderwagen, Assistant Secretary for
Preparedness and Response at Health and Human Services
Kevin Kolevar, U.S. Department of Energy, Assistant
Secretary for Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
Joe Becker, American Red Cross Disaster Relief

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

Speaker

*Admiral Harvey
Johnson:*

Transcription

Good afternoon. And thank you all for coming again this afternoon. We just concluded about an hour and a half Videoteleconference to look at the post landfall situation with Hurricane Gustav, now at Category 2. Our Videoteleconference, as you know, includes all the Federal family, it includes each of the states that have been impacted by the storm and a number of others that have an equity in how well prepared we are and how we're going to respond to the impact of Hurricane Gustav.

Overall a very positive VTC, which I think is evidence of how

much preparedness has taken place over the last several weeks and, of course, that happened because of training and coordination and the cooperation of the last many months in preparing this hurricane season.

It was a Category 2 storm, there was really no large amount of damage that came out and what are really very preliminary assessments today as General Riley will talk about the levees held strong. A little bit of a overtopping at some waters. We heard from Mayor Nagin at the opening of the VTC talking about how safe the streets were, very little flooding in New Orleans, a very positive report from him. We saw yesterday an evacuation of record proportions across the state of Louisiana. We saw a lot of ... in the evacuation it wasn't all pretty. We had a couple of issues with our train. We had a couple of issues with our medical evacuation. But I heard someone on TV this morning talk about the word agility and adaptability and that's exactly what we demonstrated yesterday. We got the mission done.

All those who needed to be evacuated, whether they were medical or general population or critical transportation needs were evacuated in one way shape or form. and a multi mobile

transportation evacuation plan for Louisiana.

We saw great assistance from the state of Texas that flew in C-130's and helicopters to help out those evacuations. We saw great effort by the host states of Mississippi and Kentucky and Arkansas and Oklahoma that all were host states for recipients and evacuees. All of those on the VTC again, I'm very pleased they've helped out their sister states. And so I think we've seen a very well prepared nation for Hurricane Gustav.

That was Act I in the plan. Act II is about to unfold. There were helicopters that were flown from Mobile, Coast Guard helicopters had to land in lakefront because they got out and the storms were still too bad, the winds and rains were still too heavy. They'll be flying this afternoon. There will be a great search and rescue plan by the state of Louisiana that will have aircraft in the air this afternoon checking out for search and rescue primarily and looking for damage assessment. So we'll know more in the next several hours about the impact of Hurricane Gustav. That's about our Phase II, what's the assessment post landfall?

And then we have to take a look at all the challenging issues of

recovery. How do we return 30,000/40,000 individuals – I don't have the right number now – about how many went out by bus, by train, by air and by plane. How do they come back? Or what are they coming back to? And how do we do that in a very orderly way? How do we look at all those individual assistance issues? The housing issues, the public issues and all of the other thing that come with the aftermath of a hurricane. But I can tell you at least from what's expected today, we did a very good collective job in terms of response. And we'll do an equally effective job in terms of recovery.

We have a great group here that can talk about their segments of this and when you take these bookends together, you'll get a good panorama of all the challenges in what we're looking at today and how we'll we've done so far as we look at the rest of the recovery of Hurricane Gustav.

General Riley:

Good afternoon, I'm General Riley, the Deputy Commander of the Corps of Engineers and if I might, I'll try to give you a little bit of an overview from this map. I don't know if we can move the map a little closer to me or not so I can stay by the microphone. But I'll give you an idea of what we know thus far in what has occurred as far as the levees and floodwalls and the other

missions that the Corps of Engineers has.

First, this shows metropolitan New Orleans, but further to the east, of course, is Mississippi wave land[PH] received significant surges and some flooding of homes along wave land that was affected during Katrina as well. You know, they got hit much worse. And then here in the Gulf Inter-coastal waterway, which comes into the inner harbor canal of New Orleans. They have wave surge heights up to just a foot below the levees and then some wave over-wash.

We have in the inner canals, the interior drainage canals of New Orleans. You know, at post-Katrina we put gates at the lakes. We do not have to close those three gates because the surge heights did not reach that level into the lake. However, in to the inner harbor canal you may have seen news reports this morning on the western side of the Ninth Ward, up the Ninth Ward on the western side of the inner harbor, you may have seen some over wash and some flooding over the top of that and into the flooding which the city's pump will keep up with that flooding interior into the city.

And as you go further down you'll have down here in St. Bernard there is no reports of any overtopping in the St. Bernard parish. You go further down – or let's start over here on the west bank, in the west bank their gaps. We did close the Harvey Sector canal gate right along the Harvey canal to close that off from flood water that's approaching from the south.

There are gaps in the system over the west bank. There is no protection in this area, although there have been no reports of flooding or overtopping there. So there has been wave over wash and there will be a lot of interior flooding due to rainfall, which the city pumps are keeping up with.

This is a little bit broader of a map, which shows New Orleans here. Here's Lake Pontchartrain. As you go down the Mississippi River to Plackman's parish, which took nearly the initial part of this storm, we suspect – although electricity is out – we don't have any teams down there because of the storm. We suspect there will be substantial overtopping and maybe some erosion of those levees. Both the river levees and the hurricane protection levees.

As you move, the storm, this is the storm track that came up. Of course the hardest hit is on the right side of the storm as it spins around. Up in Lafourche parish we do have a project, Larousse to build the metal[PH], walking into here, I got an unconfirmed report of significant flooding in Lafourche parish from Grand Isle up Highway Two. Of course Grand Isle was completely over washed and out there is a barrier island.

And as you move further home there's a city of about 100,000 people. A very significant danger to this city and then also with Morgan City. We do have some flood protection in Morgan City but that's essentially for river rain flooding down the Calcasieu River. Not against a hurricane surge that may come in from behind those levees. So we're very, very concerned about flooding in southern Louisiana and overtopping of any systems down there and a surge through those highly populated areas down in the wetlands. So our thoughts and prayers go out to all the people of Louisiana and all those who are evacuated and especially those who have homes there and who may still be remaining.

In addition to that, the Corps has a navigation mission. So in

conjunction with the Coast Guard and NNOA, we are ensuring that we maintain navigation. You heard reports of vessels that are loose, some in the inner harbor, right now they are not in danger of any floodwalls or levees.

Additionally we support FEMA in our support function with the management of debris removal after the storm moves through. With temporary power, we've already installed some generators in northern Louisiana and also the delivery of ice and water which has begun with ice orders.

Lastly we're all looking at Hurricane Hannah out in the Atlantic. It is now looks to be heading towards Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina. So we will ensure that we have coverage across the southeastern United States for that as well. Thank you very much.

Major General Bill Etter:

My name is Major General Bill Etter. I'm the Director of Domestic Operations for the National Guard Bureau. Before I start I'd like to add that my thoughts and prayers and all of the Guard's families are with the folks down in the Gulf Coast for our citizens who are displaced and affected by the storm.

I'd like to provide you an update on the actions of your National Guard to Hurricane Gustav. The response so far has been superb and no effort has been spared to ensure the safety and security of the well being of the citizens of the Gulf Coast. We all recognize, and I'm getting to see all these folks here a lot, early on the potential seriousness of this storm and started coordination in to support the effected states. This included FEMA, DHS, the United States Northern Command and all the inner agency partners as we build one team, one effort to support the citizens. And right now we believe we've had a rapid, effective response to this storm.

Yesterday the Secretary of Defense authorized up to 50,000 members of the National Guard to respond to this storm. They will operate under the control of their governance to the adjunct generals. Right now, as we talk, we have just over 14,000 citizen soldiers and citizen airmen responding to the Gulf Coast. We are poised to flex this number as required.

While we were working hard on the response to Gustav we are also preparing for the potential landfall of Hannah. While time will not permit me to articulate every single last effort, let me give

you some examples of what your National Guard has been doing. We've evacuated over 17,000 citizens of New Orleans. We evacuated over 600 special needs patients regionally. We have flown more than 65 aero medical evacuation missions. In the wake of the storm we are commencing 24 hour security controls and that's starting now.

There are 350 buses with National Guard drivers pre-positioned and prepared to conduct a post-landfall evacuation if needed. In the region the National Guard has over 3,800 high water vehicles. And the National Guard has 86 helicopters staged just outside the edge of the storm ready to deploy as soon as the weather will allow.

I want to reiterate the positive effect that this unprecedented, well coordinated inter agency team effort has done. And, again, our thoughts are with the people down on the Coast today. At the end I'll be happy to answer some questions.

*Dr. Craig
Vanderwagen:*

Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Craig Vanderwagen, I'm the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at Health and Human Services. We've got lots of operations underway but I'm going to talk a little bit about Gustav today. I will talk about three things,

really, one is what did we do in the evacuation process? What are our current capabilities in the theater for the activities that we anticipate will occur and some things about future orientation.

Over the weekend with our partners led by the state of Louisiana and their Department of Health we evacuated over 9,000 hospital and nursing home patients. The majority of those were nursing home patients, some of whom were critically ill despite the fact that they were in a nursing home. We evacuated about 400 of those by air, the balance really was accomplished through ground. We had over 1,000 ambulances operating in Louisiana over the weekend. We had para-transit capabilities.

Unfortunately we did have three deaths. And our sympathy and our feelings for the families of those individuals is very high. No deaths are acceptable to us. None.

On the other hand, the risks associated with the evacuation of critically ill people who are multi system failure is a risk. When the hospital staff were looking down the barrel of the gun on Saturday thinking a Cat 5 was coming, they made decisions about evacuation of those patients and I think they probably made the right decisions. If you recall in Katrina we had scores

of deaths in hospital patients. So while we accept no deaths we feel this is something that is ... within our margin of error. These will be investigated. The Louisiana State Medical Examiner has leadership in that investigation and we'll be looking forward to seeing the findings of those investigations.

Our current operations, we had Federal medical stations, three in Texas, three in Louisiana. And those Federal medical stations in Texas held both patients from Louisiana and Texas. In Louisiana particularly we are aware that there may be individuals that will be discovered in the post-flood environment. We have room in these spaces for special medical needs. There are 750 beds at the PMAC[PH]. For those of you that remember the Pete Merovitch[PH], the field house there has stood up. It's staffed. It's equipment. A pharmacy cache. In Alexandria we have almost 1,000 beds. Again, equipment, and staff people. Ruston[PH], there are about 200 beds and we do have a significant amount of space to accommodate special needs.

We will look forward to the findings from our search and rescue colleagues in terms of getting any information about targeted health requirements. We are outreaching to the hospitals that

did stay in place. If they have augmentation requirements we will field those requirements. So the current activities over the next 24 to 48 hours will be focused on those events.

In the wave future forward we hope that people can return to their homes. We know from our Katrina experience that the requirements for special need populations may involve medical care and services for some period of time. We are prepared to do that. We are planning forward for Hannah. We are participating in the State and Federal planning cell along the Atlantic seaboard for that particular activity. We already have medical teams pre-positioned in Florida and we can rotate folks out of Mississippi and Alabama where they're currently place if we need to in response to this event. So we think we've learned some things. We're acting on that knowledge and for Hannah we're ready to move. Thank you very much.

Kevin Kolevar:

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Kolevar with the U.S. Department of Energy, Assistant Secretary for Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability. I'm going to briefly walk through the latest information that we have that speaks to the impacts of Hurricane Gustav on the energy systems in the Gulf.

I'll start first with off-shore production. The Gulf region produces about 1.3 million barrels per day. And this is about a quarter of U.S. oil production. As of this morning virtually all U.S. oil production of the Gulf is shut in. Our natural gas, the system is effected to a lesser extent. The Gulf natural gas production for this year stands at 7.4 billion cubic feet per day. This is about 15 percent of the total U.S. production and MMS is reporting that 82 percent of this daily production is now shut in.

Companies will begin assessing and reporting on the status of off-shore facilities as early as tomorrow, weather permitting. Turning to refining there are 33 U.S. Gulf Coast Refineries with a refining capacity of 7.5 million barrels per day, this is just over 40 percent of total U.S. refining capacity. Twelve of these refineries are shut down, this represents 28 percent of Gulf capacity and approximately 12 percent of U.S. refining capacity. Another ten refineries representing about 44 percent of Gulf capacity are operating at reduced runs and we haven't determined what level of production they have on going right now.

The remaining 11 refineries principally in the northern part of the state of Louisiana and Texas remain in operation. That's the last

28 percent of Gulf Coast refining. Turning to the strategic petroleum reserve, the status of the sprow[PH] remains unchanged. Three of the four sprow sites have suspended operations until the storm has passed. The Brian Mound site in Texas does remain operational. The remaining facilities will return to operations once the storm has passed.

The sprow is currently filled to a record level of 707 million barrels. It can be released at a rate of 4.4 million barrels per day and this is a little more than three times the rate of oil production from the Gulf today.

Turning next to pipelines, the most significant product pipelines, the Colonial Pipeline Explorer and Plantation lines remain in operation. Three crude oil pipelines, the cap line[PH], the loop to low cap and a Marathon Gathering lines did go down in a planned shutdown. One product pipeline is Centennial Pipeline from Texas to Illinois is down. And the Federal government is talking with the pipeline owners to determine the cause and duration of this outage.

Finally let me address electricity. As of 12 o'clock today

Louisiana reports 354,000 customers - these are not people, these are customers, think of the meter – without power. So this probably approximates 17 percent of the population of Louisiana. Mississippi is reporting 3,500 customers without power. As of 12 o'clock we did not have numbers for Alabama yet. These numbers will certainly go up, I'm confident they've already gone up. That said at this time we do not have reports of major damage to the transmission system.

So, in summary, this has been a very quick overview of the sector. Because the bulk of the storm remains over Louisiana, damage assessments will not begin to later today. I expect we'll have a much more accurate picture of the scope of damage to the system, if any, tomorrow. Thank you.

Unidentified Male: [U/I].

Unidentified Female: [U/I] determined? I wasn't [U/I].

Joe Becker: Good afternoon. I'm Joe Becker, and I lead the American Red Cross Disaster Relief. It's been a long few days for the people in the Gulf and in harm's way. And it's the beginning of many more long days for the people who have been affected by the storm. It's also been long days for the people who have been supporting the work that needs to be done to take care of them.

We've heard a lot this afternoon about the evacuation and how successful the evacuation was and the work of state, local and Federal government partners to make that happen. The other success here is that the people who could evacuate on their own did. And in great percentages. And it made such a difference. The best evidence of that that I can give is that last night the American Red Cross and our partners sheltered about 45,000 in ten states.

The first night of Katrina that number was 30,000 people over five states. We sheltered more people last night than we did the night before Katrina came. That number is growing at this point. We said we were ready to open about 600 shelters just in the four states that were in harm's way and many more shelters north of there. We only needed about 340 shelters. And we said we are ready to accommodate 140,000 people should they need a safe place to stay. And, again, we sheltered about 45,000 last night. We did have many shelters that were full, particularly further south. But there were a lot of buildings that we didn't even need the local government to decide to open for us to continue to care for the people.

The next days will solely focused on feeding and sheltering and distribution of supplies and emotional support. We'll meet the emergency needs of the people in our shelters and where the people live in the Gulf states with fixed sites and mobile distribution and volunteers spanning out into neighborhoods.

Our focus in the early days after the storm will not include financial assistance to families. It's too early in the storm to make a decision about that financial assistance. The event is still happening as we speak. And our decisions about providing that assistance will be made in a context of actions that government take as well.

If you need help today please come to a Red Cross Shelter. And we will provide you with food, with supplies, comfort and emotional support and we'll seek other community resources to meet other needs you might have.

Our priorities over the next days, first and foremost, continues to be the safety of people. The people we serve and our volunteers who are serving. Obviously with the storm, with tornados that

might be spawned, we're still very focused on life saving and life sustaining activities. Our second priority is sustaining the high level of service that we launched. We don't know how long people are going to need care. We don't know how long people are going to need shelter. And we will be there for them as long as they need those.

And third our focus at this point is re-entry plans for the communities that evacuated. How are we going to serve? When are we going to be get in? Where? Those are the decisions we're making as different parts of the Gulf Coast open up and we're able to re-enter.

We too are very focused on Hannah and potential brothers or sister named storms that might come behind Hannah. We have not used our people from the southeast part of the United States and we continue to have supplies and resources pre-positioned there in warehouses ready to serve. We're in a hurricane season. We're not planning on responding to just one event here.

And finally a message to the people still in harm's way or people

who have just endured the major effects of the storm; stay where it's safe, please. Please don't try to go back home until your told it's safe to do so. The next days are going to be very hard on a lot of people who have been in harm's way. But there are a lot of organizations, governmental and non governmental that are here to take care of people. From a full range of services just to maybe a smile and a hug and a word of comfort. Our volunteers are here to do whatever it takes and they'll do whatever it takes in the next weeks ahead. And I'd like thank in advance the Americans who give so generously to the Red Cross and organizations like ours that make our non governmental work possible. Thank you very much.

*Admiral Harvey
Johnson(?):*

Just to close out each of our presentations, I want to reiterate again, all those comments that Joe just made; our first priority is life saving. And that's what will occur this afternoon as the winds abate and we have helicopters fly out and get a good sense for what search and rescue might be required.

Our second priority is life sustaining. And that's putting supplies and equipment as quickly as possible into the places that have been impacted by the disaster. It's also getting to those people who are in shelters making sure that they are safe and secure

their immediate needs till they can go back safely to their homes.

And our third priority is everything else that will follow in terms of rebuilding individuals, rebuilding communities. Restoring infrastructure and all those things that have been impacted by the disaster. So with that, as a group, we're ready to take your questions.

Unidentified

I'd like to ask you a quick question.

Reporter (Male):

Unidentified Male:

Just a moment, please. If you can identify yourself, raise your hand, identify yourself and your news organization, please? That will be helpful.

Jeff Nacho[PH]:

Thanks. I'm Jeff Nacho from Queensguys[PH] TV. A two part question. First of all you're talking about some of the shutdowns, I believe it was oil and gas. What impact will it have for the public and when will production be back on line?

Kevin Kolevar:

Well, a lot of that depends on the results of the assessments that we'll see tomorrow. It is the case that as a Category 3 going through the Gulf, that is well within the specifications or the design specifications for these facilities. We haven't heard results or any indication yet of damage to the platforms.

Assuming that there is no significant damage to the platforms or

the undersea lines then production will begin very quickly. The companies that own those platforms move out to them very quickly to assess damage. They will repopulate them quickly. And the fact is that with the strategic petroleum reserve at record levels today, with domestic petroleum stocks, these are stocks held by private sector companies both across the United States and within the Pad 3 region being at very high levels, we are exceptionally well positioned to deal with temporary disruptions in petroleum supply.

Jeff Nacho: [I/U] going to see a huge spike in gas prices or temporary? Or will there be any effect?

Kevin Kovelar: Well the resulting impact on gas prices is the combination of the sudden spike in demand from people filling up and the difficulty of moving a lot of fuel through a system in a very short amount of time. We focus much more on the systematic damage that might result from this. We will always see ebbs and flows in the price of gas. What we need to focus on is whether or not there is any significant damage to the system, and if so, address that.

We don't see any indication of that at this time, but as I said, we'll learn more tomorrow when the companies start repopulation these platforms.

Tom Fitzgerald: Tom Fitzgerald from Fox KTTG[PH] in Washington. Is it too early or – I don't know who this is directed to. It's just a general question – is it too early at this point to say that your efforts have been a success?

Admiral Harvey Johnson: Oh, much too early. (Clears throat), excuse me. It's much too early to say they've been a success because the winds are still moving pretty strong. In New Orleans all the reports are that there is some wave over wash. There will be some interior flooding, especially from rainfall. But then in southern Louisiana is where the big concern is right now. And we won't even start our ground and air assessments until tomorrow morning when we can get out and take a really good look at it. So certainly we will not be pounding our chest at this point.

Unidentified Male: The fellow in the yellow tie.

Tom Costello: Hi. I'm Tom Costello from NBC. And I actually had Kelly's question. When you said shut in did you mean shut down temporarily?

Kevin Kovelar(?): Yeah. Shut in is production is halted at those facilities.

Unidentified Male: Next question, please? Here.

Unidentified Reporter (Male): [I/U], this is for General Riley. Are any of the levees in danger of being breached out?

General Riley: The only ones that we think are in the greatest danger are down

there in the south in the Lakoosh parish that I talked to you about earlier and the barrier facing down south near Houma and Morgan City. Carsoma[PH] has none at all. So they are very vulnerable. But in the Lakoosh parish we have one unfinished project, Larosse [I/U] metal[PH] and then some other riverine levees and floodwalls in Morgan City.

*Unidentified
Reporter (Male):
General Riley:*

So no danger in the New Orleans levee?

None that we know of. There are still, I mean, there is still a danger clearly because of the wind and the wave wash that's occurring and the tremendous pressure that's against all of the levees and floodwalls. Until that abates I think there is still a danger. But we're confident that they will stand the erosion and the forces they see right now.

Unidentified Male:

Right here.

Rick Jensen:

Rick Jensen from Fox Business Channel. You mentioned that the flyovers will begin to assess damage. Through weather projections for today do you guys have a sense of when [I/U] on the ground you can initially get into areas where the winds have died down and now is there a timeframe that you're looking at that maybe you can begin to initially start to assess?

General Riley(?):

I think they'll get some people out in New Orleans probably right now and then of course in Mississippi. But further, as I showed

you on the map down in Lakoosh parish, I don't think you'll get anybody in there until tomorrow morning.

Unidentified Male: Up front, please.

Kelly O'Neill[PH:] Kelly O'Neill, CNN. I remember you guys saying that those levees were not scheduled to be completed until 2011.

General Riley(?): That's correct.

Kelly O'Neill: For the most part. Even though they're holding their own at this point, any preliminary estimate on how much this may set you back in terms of the pressure that they withstood so far when perhaps they weren't ready to deal with that?

Admiral Harvey Johnson(?): No preliminary assessment. What we know what will set us back is remove the contractors and evacuating the contractors so there will be some remobilization time to get them back, make their assessments to see if there's any damage. And, of course, it's an unfinished project. We're about 25 percent, this is in the New Orleans [I/U], 25 percent complete with the project to complete by 2011. So what you saw in the inner harbor, those floodwalls are fairly low, about 12 feet. We will place surge barriers in the future so that it won't even reach those levees and floodwalls in the inner harbor. So there's much, much work to do.

Jeff Blitz[PH:] Jeff Blitz from Bloomberg News. I was just wondering, there was

talk about all these ships inside the inner harbor that could puncture the levels. Why are they there? I mean, wasn't that one of the lessons learned that you shouldn't have those in the future they should be taken up river or?

Admiral Harvey Johnson(?):

Well, I think it takes an awfully long time to evacuate, you'd probably have to talk to, the Coast Guard will give a much better answer to this question than I would, but it takes a while to evacuate anything. And you've got people in commerce moving it would take, I think, especially if you look at that whole southern area, it was aimed at the Gulf Coast. So there's no way you can get a ship out of the Gulf. So I think their safest bet is to anchor and harbor where they can but tie down very, very effectively.

Unidentified Male:

Right here.

Michael [I/U]:

Michael [I/U] with HD[PH?]. Admiral Johnson, can you just – in the past few years you've updated the technologies used in the recovery and response. I was wondering if you could talk to some of those issues, the portable cell phone towers, communication towers and the constant track of food and medicine part of the response. And how well the family registry has been working. And my second question is for General Etter. General, if you could just address the military's taking a more active role in this response than past responses?

*Admiral Harvey
Johnson:*

I think in terms of technology some of this is just business systems. For example, in tracking supplies and commodities. Businesses do that all across America. We've just never done that before disasters. And so now we're able to put GPS on all the vehicles that are moving. That have commodities so that if a state asks for water, for example, we could track that truck of water. They can log in their own emergency operations center and log on to our webpage and see their order moving across I-10 or something like that. And so it's a great confidence builder so people know that we've got their request. It's ordered, it's coming in their direction and it helps us manage our logistics supply.

Again, the family relocation, we learned in Katrina that as we put people on buses and airplanes and trains we sometimes separated families. And now we can go to the family locator system, people can log on and find out where they are and you can find brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and so we used that once before and we'll put that up this time and see how that comes into play.

It could very well be that some people in these shelters are there

for a number of days. So I think that system will come in very handy. We also have what we call Aid Matrix and donations management. And how do we handle donations or people who want to volunteer? And so states can put on to the web into the system that we have what their requirements might be. And those who want to volunteer or donate can log to the state of Aid Matrix and they can find out whether or not there is a need that might match up with their desire to contribute.

And so there are ways where technology has come into play in these disasters. General Etter?

General Etter:

Yes, sir. I think I have pretty much the same answer for both the active duty military through the United States Northern Command and the National Guard. We've learned a lot in the past few years and what we do now is instead of waiting to be called for a response, we anticipate it. And in some cases we pre-position assets because distance takes time to travel. So that's why we brought the helicopters in just outside the storm's edge instead of having them in the northern part of the United States and say, okay, now we need them but it will take a couple of days to get there. We bring them forward and we bring them right in.

Also with the extensive amount of planning that's occurred in the last couple of years, we had a pretty much off the shelf plan that we can reach in and go, okay, that's the scenario, we know what we got to do and we start moving assets. So I would say that we spend quite a bit of time on trying solve that problem.

Unidentified Male: Operator, let's go to the telephones to take some calls, please.

Operator: Yes. At this time if you would like to ask a question, please press star, then one on your touch-tone phone. The first question is from Spencer Shiu[PH] of The Washington Post. Go ahead, please.

Spencer Shiu: Thanks. Two questions; one on our situational awareness. Should it be taken as a troubling sign that it's not known if the Lakoosh levees survived intact and of the 200,000 or so residents of Lakoosh and [I/U] parishes. Any estimate what percent did or did not evacuate given the flood modeling. Will there be an impact on the workforce for energy companies? The second question goes to the evacuees. What was the total count of medical evacuees? And of the 30,000 or 40,000 folks taken by trains, planes and buses, it sounded as if there wasn't a count available. Was there a reason for that? Were they not registered? Does FEMA or Louisiana know where they are and

when can people expect to be returned? Thanks.

General Riley:

This is General Riley of the Corps of Engineers. The first question reference is a concern of not knowing the condition of those levees in the south of Lakoosh parish. Of course that is way out into the wetlands, probably 40 to 50 miles and very dangerous territory. And we of course not only want all the citizens evacuated but want all of our personnel and any of the police and local personnel evacuated as well. Initial reports did come through the local police. So that is sufficient, of course, until we can get down there on the ground and in the air to see the full extent of any flooding or overtopping down there.

*Dr. Craig
Vanderwagen:*

Spencer, this is Vanderwagen. I did cite a number for evacuated medical patients. It was around 9,000. I can give you a specific number, but I think that might change slightly. We had about 9,000 medical evacuees. The majority of those, over 8,000 were from nursing home settings and some home care settings. We had about 460 that were air evaced. There were about 40 of those that were ventilator dependent. We have pretty good statistics in play. And in terms of their definitive care location we've tracked those patients, we have an electronic medical record now in play for our medical assistance teams and we have a pretty good picture of where those individuals went.

Spencer Shiu:

Thanks, Craig. I guess my question was for Chief Paulison. I think he mentioned 30,000 or 40,000 government evacuees that there wasn't a count. And was there an evacuation estimate for those two coastal parishes?

Admiral Harvey Johnson:

I'll just say that if I give a good answer that's because I am here, if I give a bad answer, Chief Paulison, wherever he is, will have to answer that question. Chief Paulison, by the way, is with the President right now on Air Force One. He flew down today to visit in Texas and to observe some of the places where evacuees were taken. One of the hiccups that we had in terms of the evacuation is we had a system called Phoenix. Actually the state has a system called Phoenix. And their state system is able to register people with a wristband and a barcode and that system bogged down in the numbers of people who are registering. And so we ended up doing a bunch of manual manifests in order to get people moving.

So it was a low tech, but what it got was people moving and out of town. And we're consolidating all of those and putting them back into a Phoenix system. And so now we have not an electronic manifest but paper manifest to know where we dropped people off in terms of the shelters by train and by

airplane. So we have a good idea of where people are.

In terms of the evacuation of the lower parishes, I don't know. Governor Jintel indicated the 1.9 million people evacuated and they recorded day and from the state report that 95 percent of those in the lower parishes evacuated. And so I don't know how to extrapolate that across those lower parishes.

Spencer Shiu: Thank you.

Unidentified Male: Operator, next question please?

Operator: The next question comes from Darryl Hughes of the Dow Jones Newswire.

Darryl Hughes: Hi, guys. This is a FEMA question. What's the update on supplies and resources? At the beginning there was like 478 emergency generators, truckloads of tarps and blankets. Are those numbers still the same? And has all those supplies made it to the Gulf Coast? And the second question is, is there any talk of assistance for affected families. I know it's still early on and you guys haven't done any assessment just yet.

Admiral Harvey Johnson: I don't really have all the numbers of how much truckloads of water and MRE's we delivered. What it really turns out to be is a combination pre-positioned by the states which we worked with the states in the last several months to identify what were their

requirements and how much did they want to pre-position the state in and how much would FEMA have at a centralized distribution center?

And so there really was – this is the first summer that we really took a systems approach to commodities across the Gulf Coast. So I can provide specific numbers to you later if that will be beneficial.

And in terms of providing what we call expedited assistance, which is, as Joe Becker mentioned is providing dollars or funds to individual families. It is a bit too early to talk about that. I think we'll do it at the end of today and tomorrow what the assessment is and how quickly people can move back into their homes. And, of course, the sooner they move back to their homes the less requirement there might be for some financial assistance. So it's probably about a day too early to be able to answer that question.

*Unidentified
Reporter (Male):
Unidentified Male:*

Are you guys going to send out ...

... Gustav you can find the stadium supplies listed under three PowerPoint slides that will have the summary for you and a location of where those supplies are. Next question, Operator?

And the last one from the telephone.

Operator: The next question is from Eric Lipton[PH] of The New York Times.

Eric Lipton:

Operator: Mr. Lipton?

Eric Lipton: Oh? Sorry. Yes. I had a question ... this is Eric Lipton from The New York Times. I understood that Coast Guard helicopters were in the air earlier today. Could you describe what they saw and how that mission went? And secondly, with the industrial canal, we continue to see these images of water lapping over the top. Is there still a possibility that the industrial canal could give way and what is the likelihood of that occurring.

Admiral Harvey Johnson(?):

I'll answer the Coast Guard question. Being a former Coast Guard aviator, I wish that I was in one of those helicopters flying today. But two helicopters they had stationed in New Orleans and Louisiana, during a hurricane they'll evacuate, so they don't get caught up in it, they'll evacuate to Mobile, Alabama. This morning they launched a fly from Mobile back to New Orleans to do a damage assessment. But as they got close they found that the winds were still too high for safe flight. So they landed at Lakefront which is fairly close to New Orleans but not quite all the way there. When we finished our VTC about a half hour ago

they were still on the deck in Lakefront. The expectation is they'll take off again this afternoon and fly over the rest of New Orleans and the east over toward Mississippi and provide our first damage assessment. So it's a little bit too early to have the results of that, but we hope to have those Coast Guard helicopters results within the next hour.

General Riley: With regards to the photographs that you're seeing on the news of the inner harbor canal, those floodwalls that are being overtopped, what you see behind those is the wave wash is coming over, they're splashing on the back side. Those are the newly replaced floodwalls and what's behind there is what we call scour protection. So it's a resistant to scour. So you have solid concrete on the land side of the floodwall that is protecting the backside from erosion. And so we're confident of those structures, although it's still very dangerous. Anytime you're getting wave over wash like that and wind and wave continue to press against those walls, I think we're confident of the resilience of those new floodwalls.

Unidentified Male: We have time for two more questions.

Unidentified Reporter (Male): General Riley, you mentioned that in New Orleans you had only 25 percent of the work done for rebuilding the levees there. And I think a lot of outsiders may wonder how is that possible?

You've had three years of really good weather to do your work. And you say it's going to be 2011? What's taking you so long? And can you explain that to those of us who don't do your job for a living?

General Riley:

Sure. A great question. Post-Katrina we had, there is 350 miles of a system in the vicinity of New Orleans. About 150 miles of it were damaged during Katrina. So we spent nearly the full next year, a little bit less than a year, repairing all those 150 miles of damage and we also made the improvements on another 70, so 220 miles of those 350 were repaired in some fashion. And then the rest of the 350 were surveyed.

We've shortly after Katrina received about \$5.7 billion dollars to begin the design of environmental studies of developing a greater level of protection reducing the risk even further. And then just recently in the last couple of months a new supplemental of a little bit less than \$6 billion as well was just recently provided to us.

So it's a six year project. We're about two and a half years into it. And completing, it will probably be about a third of the construction contracts. We've got a lot of designs underway and

a lot of the environmental work underway. A lot of data collection on underground conditions. It takes a lot of time to do that properly. So although we are working this with a great sense of urgency, it does take time to do this properly. And design it properly against all conditions. And to build a system that is resilient against all storms.

Unidentified Reporter (Male):

So you're saying confidently that the people of New Orleans will have a better, safer system when this is all said and done?

General Riley:

Oh, there's no question that they have a better, safer system right now than they did in Katrina. And in 2011, as long as hurricanes allow us to continue to work and the funding continues to flow, we'll have the system resistant against a one percent chance or what's commonly called a 100 year storm.

Unidentified Male:

Last question? Ma'am?

Unidentified Reporter (Female):

You said you were very successful in getting people to evacuate this time. Are you worried that people might not stay away as long as you need them to considering that the severity of the storm did lesson? And what is your early plan for those who do need housing assistance for a period of time?

Admiral Harvey Johnson(?):

That is a good question. Let me just say when they evacuate, I think all the credit really goes to individuals, as Becker said, to make that personal decision. But it goes to governors who made

very, very strong statements and it goes to parishes of Louisiana and other counties who made very, very strong statements. And this year we've asked for voluntary evacuations and then imposed mandatory evacuations.

A lot of credit goes to a lot of people. And they've been working this for weeks in terms of the [I/U] for hurricane season. So I think it really was a successful evacuation. Do I think that they'll want to come back home soon? I think that you would want to come back home soon. So we know that that's coming. What we want to do is be able to go very quickly back to these communities again, after the storms have passed and determine how safe those areas are.

Nobody wants them to go back into their home until it's safe and secure. And I'll note that as we walked in here, Mayor Nagin said it's going to take 24 to 36 hours for New Orleans to come back up to strength. So I commend him to making that kind of a statement and recognize that it takes some time to make sure you assess it completely and that he as an elected official will have to declare his area safe for re-habitation. So I know that there will be a real desire as any of us would have to get back an

find out whether our home is still there and it's condition. So hopefully that will be done in the next 24 to 36 hours.

We put out a hurricane housing plan early in the summer. We have a plan and we know how we're going to approach providing housing needs as required. And what that plans says is the very first [I/U] use existing resources as best as possible. Even with a home with a roof blown off or roof damage can be repaired and that home could be inhabited very quickly. So we want to use their homes and have people move back when it's safe.

Use hotels and motels, use rental assistance. Use all of the existing infrastructure that's possible and maximize the use of that. And then our second would be to use mobile homes or cottages. We've seen a number of creative designs since Katrina. We'll use all those to the maximum extent that we can possible. And that's our plan for the upcoming season.

We did this in the Midwest floods by the way. The exact same housing plan we're using in the Gulf Coast and we're following Hannah and we'll use it for any other disaster that comes up.

Real quick, I appreciate the question before about the family locator system and what I didn't give you is how to connect to it. And so let me just do that. It's the National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System. NEFRL if you can say that. National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System. And here's a 1 800 number. It's 1 800 588 9822. 1 800 588 9822. And that could be reached online at www.fema.gov and on that webpage you'll find this National Emergency Family Registry Locator System. And you'll also find the Aid Matrix that I mentioned before in terms of donations and volunteers that I mentioned before. Thank you very much.

(END OF AUDIO FILE)