



Remarks Prepared for Delivery of
Sandy K. Baruah
Acting Administrator
FEMA Gustav Press Conference
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The Small Business Administration is not a first responder agency, but given the critical role SBA plays in economic recovery, we are actively and closely engaged in preparation activities with FEMA and other State and Federal entities.

SBA, along with our sister Federal agencies has overhauled its processes and response protocols to be forward-leaning. We learned important lessons from the '05 hurricanes and we are prepared to effectively execute our role to support the post-disaster economic recovery.

Since 2005, SBA has:

- Improved and streamlined our disaster application review process and approval process.
- Upgraded our disaster system technology infrastructure to allow for 12,000 concurrent users -- up from 2,000.
- Added 200,000 square feet of space to address surge processing volume needs.
- Implemented an on-line application for SBA disaster loans -- eliminating the need to make a physical trip to a SBA office or Disaster Response Center.
- Expanded our disaster response workforce, including 2,000 reserve employees ready to jump into action if needed.
- Established the Executive Office of Disaster Strategic Planning and Operations, led by retired Navy Rear Admiral Steve Smith, to improve our internal coordination as well as our partnership with our Federal and State partners.

SBA is coordinated with FEMA and the States and we have already pre-positioned employees in the region and are ready to work side-by-side with FEMA and others to conduct PDAs -- Preliminary Damage Assessments.

I was in Louisiana and Florida just this week as well as SBA's Operations Center in Atlanta to see first hand our response activities and to ensure our SBA team members have what they need to be fully responsive.

As I said, SBA is not a first responder agency, but we play a critical role in economic recovery. You don't have to be a Small Business to take advantage of SBA's disaster recovery programs. We have low-interest loan program for businesses of all sizes,

homeowners, renters, and non-profits -- and we have press packages for all of you that outline these various programs.

Let me close by stressing the messages from my colleagues. Now is the time for preparation -- for yourself, your family and loved ones, your pets, your vital records and such. A hurricane or even tropical storm of any strength can cause tremendous damage and our first concern is the protection of human life, and then helping those impacted with their recovery efforts.

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