

September 8, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR FEDERAL NEPA CONTACTS

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SUBJECT: Emergency Actions and NEPA

This memorandum provides:

- General information on the response to Katrina
- Reporting oil and chemical spills
- Projected long term recovery efforts
- How agencies can respond to emergencies and comply with NEPA.

Please distribute this memorandum to your agency planning and environmental personnel.

General information on the response to Katrina:

Information is available on the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov> and specifics on the government's response are provided at the "What Government is Doing" link which can be directly accessed at [http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial\\_0712.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0712.xml)

Reporting oil and chemical spills:

Spills of hazardous substances must be reported to the National Response Center (NRC). The Center is integral to long-established procedures in preparedness and planning for natural disasters like hurricanes. The NRC serves as the sole federal point of contact for reporting oil, chemical, radiological, and biological releases in the United States.

Spills or discharges in the hurricane's aftermath should contact the NRC immediately at (800) 424-8802 or (202) 267-2675. The NRC is available to take calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

The NRC supplies Coast Guard and EPA response personnel with incident reports of oil discharges and chemical releases. This information helps them determine next steps in responding to the natural disaster. The information from the NRC reports, coupled with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Rapid Needs Assessment, will help the Coast Guard and EPA ensure the protection of public health and the environment. For more information on the National Response Center, visit the NRC website <http://www.nrc.uscg.mil/nrchp.html>.

Projected long term recovery efforts:

- a. The White House is establishing an interagency group that will develop and disseminate policies to guide long term rebuild efforts. Further information will be forthcoming.
- b. The long term recovery component of the National Response Plan (Emergency Support Function #14) is establishing an environmental coordination group. The points of contact at the Regional and District Field Offices to assist in ensuring that response actions have minimal adverse environmental effects will be distributed in the near future.

How agencies can respond to emergencies and comply with NEPA:

- a. Read attachment 1, Emergency Alternative Arrangements under the National Environmental Policy Act, and call CEQ if you are facing an emergency response action and have any questions. This is the time to respond and use NEPA to facilitate, not slow down or hinder, actions necessary to preserve life and resources. It is also the time to demonstrate our continuing commitment to environmental stewardship by ensuring that response and revitalization activities do not inadvertently create unnecessary future environmental problems.
- b. Attachment 2, Preparing Focused, Concise and Timely Environmental Assessments, is provided for your use in those cases where NEPA applies and there is no statutory exemption, applicable categorical exclusion, nor need for alternative arrangements (see the attached background paper). This focused EA meets NEPA requirements under all circumstances.

Any questions you have regarding emergency response activities and NEPA should be directed to your agency NEPA contacts or to CEQ and we will ensure our coordination with your headquarters' environmental office (see: <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/contacts.cfm>).

Attachment 1: Emergency Alternative Arrangements under the National Environmental Policy Act

Attachment 2: Preparing Focused, Concise and Timely Environmental Assessments

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