



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

www.fema.gov/hazards/hurricanes/nhp

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, NHP conducts a hurricane surge analysis of all types of storms. This includes an assessment of potential hazards, existing road and other transportation systems, the population (e.g., demographics, behavior analysis), and shelters. This information helps officials determine where individuals are most likely to go when fleeing from a storm.

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.

Analyzing the Evacuation Response to Hurricane Katrina

FEMA is working with Federal, State, and local officials to establish an approach for the NHP to conduct a post-storm assessment of the Hurricane Katrina evacuation activities. FEMA routinely 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. While funding and other resources to conduct a Hurricane Katrina post-storm assessment currently are pending, FEMA is developing a plan to analyze the impacted evacuation roadway networks, storm surge basins, and evacuation clearance times that were applied to the response. The findings of this assessment will help uncover necessary improvements for decision assistance models and tools to ensure the safety and effectiveness of future evacuations orders.



Aiding Response and Recovery

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

In addition, a Hurricane Liaison Team (HLT) is deployed to assist the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in communicating the latest forecast information to the emergency management community. The HLT develops and disseminates information about the latest advisory from the NHC to the Federal, State, and local emergency management agencies. Prior to the landfall of Hurricane Katrina, a Hurricane Liaison Team was deployed to the NHC in Miami. In addition, the FEMA Regional Hurricane Program Manager(s) holds periodic conference calls with State and local officials to aid in the coordination the evacuation operations between Regions, States, and communities. Because evacuation operations affect several States interstate coordination is critical to avoid major traffic congestion.

The NHP conducts post-storm assessments of how effective the Program's tools and products have been in assisting the State and local decision makers during recent evacuations from hurricane and tropical storms. The Post Storm Assessments are used as the basis to refine and improve existing State and local hurricane response and evacuation plans. These assessments often identify new problem areas created by hurricane impacts and expose operational decision-making and resource shortfalls. Post-Storm assessments are a vital data collection tool utilized to capture perishable hurricane related intelligence that is used to calibrate all tools and analysis guidelines developed through the Hurricane Evacuation Studies (HES). Such studies greatly enhance the impacted decision maker's capability to respond to future land falling tropical systems, as well as provide the National Hurricane Program with a mechanism to verify product results, user-ability, and data accuracy.