

## **Chapter 6**

### **Public Information**

Although not a major part of previous FEMA/USACE hurricane evacuation study efforts, public information is recognized as an important final element that must be addressed. Study products and data must ultimately be tailored to a format that the media and general public can understand so protective actions including evacuation and in-place sheltering can be made for each household. Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili were good opportunities to evaluate how effective the messages were delivered to local and state officials and if the hurricane evacuation information is getting into the hands of the general public. It was also an opportunity to assess additional needs regarding public information both in terms of pre-season hurricane education as well as immediate information during a threat or response to a hurricane.

Methods used and suggestions offered in the study areas to inform the public in Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili and for future events included the following:

1. Public information brochures are developed and widely distributed early in the season showing vulnerable areas, evacuation routes and levels, and tips on hurricane preparedness.
2. Press briefings are done with national and local media to insure that they (radio, TV, newspapers) disseminate consistent information to the public. Emergency management officials provided packets of hurricane information early in the season to media outlets.
3. Law enforcement officials drive through neighborhoods with sirens and P.A. systems to encourage people to evacuate – this technique is used in some beach communities – some officials even go door-to-door.
4. Some communities provide evacuation information to the public through printed information in the local phone book.
5. An important means is through radio and television – some communities use cable TV overrides to alert the public of evacuation advisories and provide public service announcements.

6. Local emergency management staff and citizens for public education and information use the Weather Channel extensively. The National Weather Service is also consulted for guidance and advice.
7. Some emergency management officials fax advisory and teleconference information to media.
8. Some agencies use their web sites to display storm information and advisories.
9. State produced hurricane brochures are popular in many areas.
10. Louisiana State University provides assistance with mapping of surge areas, evacuation routes, and shelter locations, and provides students to assist working in EOC's.
11. Local public information officers are important resources during the event to interface with the media and public.
12. NWS and emergency management agencies provide information about potential storm surge heights.
13. Some selected areas provided hurricane information in French, Vietnamese, and Spanish.
14. Vermilion Parish gave school children public information packages including hurricane-tracking charts. These were given out well in advance of the hurricane season and were well received by residents of the Parish.
15. Government agencies and other organizations at all levels should annually review and update and expand hurricane awareness public information materials. Such materials should have user-friendly graphics and describe the consequences of a major land-falling hurricane. Such materials could include risk maps and evacuation zones.
16. State and local organizations should develop public education materials and outreach campaigns for residents of mobile homes.
17. Local governments should continue to collaborate with news media outlets to clearly communicate evacuation orders or directives including the time frames and zones for phased evacuation, evacuation routes and estimated travel times to various destinations.

18. State and local emergency management agencies should develop a special public awareness campaign about the catastrophic scenarios of a major hurricane strike in the News Orleans area and include special protective action guidance.