



**State Emergency
Response Team**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Region IV

Florida Recovery Office



FEMA

News Release

Sept. 14, 2009

FRO-09- NR82

Media Contact: 407-268-8385

FIVE YEARS LATER: FLORIDA PANHANDLE STRONGER FOLLOWING 2004 HURRICANES

\$46.7 million investment makes region better able to withstand future disasters

ORLANDO, Fla. — As the Florida Panhandle marks five years since Hurricane Ivan, federal and state recovery managers said today that record funding triggered by the 2004 hurricanes has made the region more ready to face future disasters.

On top of the more than **half-billion** dollars provided to rebuild infrastructure like public buildings or roads, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set aside more than \$46.7 million in additional funds for Panhandle schools, fire stations, and other public facilities.

The additional federal dollars, approved for public agencies throughout the Panhandle, funded measures that go far beyond simply rebuilding. Measures included roofs upgraded to withstand 140 mph winds, and adding storm shutters where none previously existed. Statewide, a total of \$420 million in projects was approved.

“By rebuilding to higher standards we’re preserving our most important public services,” said Ruben D. Almaguer, Interim Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “Instead of making repairs to damaged buildings after a future disaster, we hope hospitals will be treating patients, schools will quickly reopen, and police will be on the streets serving the public.”

In a typical disaster, schools, fire stations and other public facilities are rebuilt to meet the standards of current building code. Improvements made with hazard mitigation dollars provided through FEMA’s Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs far exceed these standards.

“Looking back on five years of recovery, we’re proud that local and state officials took to heart our goal of rebuilding a stronger Florida,” said Robert Ives, Director of the FEMA Florida Recovery Office. “By working side by side with the state, we’ve helped Panhandle communities seize the opportunity to better protect their citizens.”

The FEMA-state partnership was further solidified during the 2004 storm season when former Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management Craig Fugate formed a unified command. This system – used for the first time in Florida in 2004 – merged state and federal response teams to solve problems together. Fugate is now the Administrator of FEMA.

(MORE)

PANHANDLE STRONGER FOLLOWING 2004 HURRICANES – Pg. 2

FEMA's strong partnership with the State of Florida has continued since 2004. Federally funded hardening projects were cooperatively reviewed and approved by state and federal teams at the shared Florida Recovery Office in Lake Mary, Fla.

FEMA's investment should also save money for all in the long run. An independent study by the National Institute of Building Science's Multihazard Mitigation Council found that every dollar spent on mitigation can save as much as four dollars in response and recovery costs.

Selected examples of hazard mitigation in the Florida Panhandle

Applicant	Description	Dollar Amount
Escambia County School District	Significant roof upgrades were approved for school district facilities throughout the county including Woodham, J.M. Tate and Pine Forest high schools. Other examples include Longleaf, Helen Caro, C.A. Weis and Hallmark elementary schools along with J.C Bailey middle.	\$4,002,567
Rebuild Northwest Florida	More than 3,500 Escambia County homes received hurricane clips, shutters or bracing to harden against high winds.	\$20,003,323
Escambia County	Structural improvements to the roof and walls of the Pensacola Civic Center will protect the building against high winds.	\$350,304
City of Pensacola	A new debris wall will better protect Pensacola City Hall. Elevated cooling units will prevent future damage to the air conditioning system.	\$1,807,399
City of Pensacola	This project involves upgrades to harden the walls and roof of warehouse six at the Port of Pensacola.	\$392,783
Santa Rosa County	Enhanced pilings will lift the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier by an additional five feet in order to reduce damage from storm surge and wave action.	\$890,595
Santa Rosa County	Upgrades were approved to improve the performance of the roof at the Santa Rosa County Jail.	\$187,986

(MORE)

PANHANDLE STRONGER FOLLOWING 2004 HURRICANES – Pg. 3

Santa Rosa County	The elevation of ten lift station control panels will speed the restoration of the wastewater collection system for nearly two thousand homes and businesses.	\$199,369
Santa Rosa County	Hurricane barriers, which are similar to shutters, will provide protection for the Chumuckla Community Center.	\$ 99,240
Okaloosa County	A stronger roof, shutters and other structural improvements will fortify the Okaloosa County Emergency Operations Center.	\$1,233,404
Okaloosa County School District	Significant roof enhancements were approved for school district facilities including Silver Sands School, Crestview and Niceville high schools.	\$1,176,903
Holmes County	Limestone fill stabilized the surface of roads throughout the county and will prevent future washouts.	\$1,123,837
Holmes County	A stronger roof, shutters and other structural improvements will protect the Holmes County Emergency Operations Center against high winds.	\$229,333
Washington County	A new, fortified roof was installed at Northwest Florida Community Hospital along with storm shutters and hurricane panels.	\$908,021
Panama City Beach	The City Hall Annex received hurricane shutters for dozens of windows.	\$17,512
Jackson County	Improvements hardened the roof, walls, windows and doors of the Jackson County Emergency Operations Center to withstand 160 mph winds.	\$119,103
Calhoun County	The Blountstown Public Library was protected with hurricane shutters and window screens.	\$71,184

(MORE)

PANHANDLE STRONGER FOLLOWING 2004 HURRICANES – Pg. 4

Calhoun County	The senior citizens center, which serves as an emergency shelter, was strengthened with hurricane protection screens.	\$30,053
Franklin County	Upgrades to Alligator Drive (CR 370) aim to lessen or prevent damage from storm surge.	\$105,298
Apalachicola	Dozens of specially designed hurricane shutters will protect the historic Raney House Museum from the impacts of a future hurricane.	\$31,655
Liberty County	This project involves upgrades to harden the roof, walls, windows and doors of the Liberty County Emergency Operations Center.	\$165,804
City of Quincy	A new concrete culvert will prevent future water damage to the Stewart Street bridge.	\$27,540
Jefferson County	A stronger roof, shutters and other structural improvements will fortify the Jefferson County Emergency Operations Center.	\$214,708

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. All students, teachers and parents can find educational information and free downloadable materials at: www.KidsGetAPlan.com. And for the latest daily situation and flash reports go to: www.YouTube.com/FloridaSERT.

###

For more information on FEMA, go to www.fema.gov. For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management visit www.floridadisaster.org.