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GOVERNOR SENDS DISASTER SPECIALISTS TO HELP FLORIDA RECOVERY

Governor George E. Pataki today announced that New York State is sending nine disaster management specialists to assist in the recovery efforts in Florida following the devastation caused by Hurricane Dennis.

"We are proud to send this team of specialists to help our friends in Florida recover from the wrath of Hurricane Dennis less than a year after that state was devastated by four successive hurricanes," Governor Pataki said. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to Dennis' victims and I want all Floridians to know that New York stands ready to assist them during this very difficult time."

The deployment came about because New York State is a member of the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which establishes a mutual partnership with other states to provide aid and assistance in times of emergency. Approved by Congress in 1996, 48 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories have ratified EMAC.

Governor Pataki signed legislation on September 17, 2001 - six days after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City - that enabled New York State to immediately enter into the compact. Twenty-four states, including Florida, sent 37 emergency management specialists to assist in the response and recovery following the WTC attack. Those experts were directly involved in helping the Emergency Operations Center in New York City or the State's Emergency Coordination Center at the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) in Albany.

Today, the Governor dispatched the specially trained State and local employees who are specialists in managing the various aspects of response and recovery including command, operations, planning and logistics. The specialists will serve a 14-day tour of duty. They will be staged at Tallahassee before proceeding to their assignment in Santa Rosa County. Agencies providing personnel include SEMO, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, the Department of Health and the city of Oneonta.

Governor Pataki said that SEMO meanwhile continues to monitor the projected path of the remnants of Dennis to ensure that New York State is prepared to respond to any storm-related damage that could be caused as the remains of the tropical system move north in the days ahead.

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SEMO Director James W. Tuffey said, "EMAC expedites valuable resources - such as personnel and equipment - from member states during times of emergency. New York State, under Governor Pataki, has a long history of sending assistance to our sister states and countries when they need it most."
EMAC facilitates member states sending personnel and equipment to help disaster relief efforts in other states, augmenting the assistance already provided by the affected state and the federal government.

This is not the first deployment of New York State personnel under EMAC. The State provided 20 disaster management and relief specialists to assist Florida last year when it was struck by four hurricanes in late August and September. New York dispatched the specialists while at the same time continuing to coordinate the national effort under the compact.

EMAC provides for clear, predictable and standardized operating procedures for member states. Officers of the state offering assistance are considered agents of the state requesting assistance for purposes of tort liability and immunity.

Governor Pataki also asked New Yorkers to join in the Hurricane Dennis recovery effort.

"New Yorkers are generous and compassionate people who always stand ready to help," he said. "The best way to help now is through cash donations.

"Based on the lessons learned from previous national disasters, donations of materials, food, and clothing actually created problems for hard-pressed response agencies," the Governor said. "Those organizations were forced to divert personnel and equipment from their response duties to managing, sorting and distributing a mountain of good will donations.

"For these reasons, and to provide the victims of Hurricane Dennis with the assistance they desperately need, I'm asking New Yorkers to show their concern through cash donations," the Governor said.

Anyone who wants to assist those affected by Hurricane Dennis may make a donation to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by calling 1-800 HELP-NOW or visiting online at www.redcross.org.