



New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness **NEWS**

Jon S. Corzine, Governor

Richard L. Cañas, Director

For Immediate Release:
August 10, 2007

For More Information Contact:
Roger Shatzkin (609) 588-7250
Sgt. Stephen Jones (609) 882-2000 X6513

CABINET OFFICIALS CONDUCT HURRICANE EVACUATION EXERCISE *— Follows Up on Lessons Learned from Last Year and Addresses Recovery Efforts —* *Officials Urge New Jersey Residents to Take Steps to Be Prepared*

(WEST TRENTON) – State Homeland Security and Preparedness Director Richard L. Cañas today led New Jersey Cabinet Members through a hurricane evacuation exercise – a drill involving the fictional scenario of a hurricane striking the New Jersey coast. The exercise was conducted as a “tabletop” or logistical discussion at New Jersey State Police Headquarters.

Today’s exercise was designed to test the state’s ability to evacuate citizens, provide emergency response and communications, and recover from damages caused by a severe storm, Cañas said. It follows up a similar exercise last year during which Cabinet officials focused on a coastal hurricane. A review of last year’s exercise recommended that exercising be conducted periodically. Cabinet members were only given several days’ notice about the drill to make the simulation as realistic as possible.

“Exercises enhance the state’s response and recovery efforts,” Governor Jon S. Corzine said. “Today’s drill and future planning sessions are designed to ensure our emergency management planners and first responders are well-prepared and well-trained when called to respond to any emergency.”

The New Jersey State Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), directed by State Police Colonel Rick Fuentes, leads the state’s response and recovery efforts in the event of an emergency — either natural or man-made. The Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, under Cañas, is charged with ensuring that NJOEM has the resources it needs to lead the state’s response efforts.

“The Governor is committed to ensuring that Cabinet members and senior administration officials are prepared to make critical decisions that will affect our state and our citizens, before and during an emergency,” Cañas said. “While today’s exercise focused on our response to a hurricane, it teaches valuable lessons that can be applied to the state’s response to any emergency, whether it’s a terrorist attack or an industrial accident.”

In preparation for hurricanes and other emergencies, NJOEM works with county and local agencies to help enhance their evacuation plans, including plans to use mass transit to help evacuate individuals who depend on public transportation. The state and its local partners have also developed “reverse lane strategies” which would expedite an evacuation by sending traffic in one direction along major statewide highways.



The officials stressed that, as a result of New Jersey's population density, it would take many hours to evacuate most coastal areas. Therefore, citizens must take responsibility to prepare for an evacuation considerably in advance of an actual order to evacuate. The officials urged residents who would most likely have to evacuate to take the following minimum precautions:

- Keep at least a half a tank of gas in your car at all times to avoid being stuck in line at a gas station during an evacuation.
- Learn about your community's or county's plans to provide buses and other mass transit to assist in evacuation.
- Take orders to evacuate seriously and act immediately.
- Pack snacks, toys and other items to keep your family occupied.
- Make arrangements to stay with friends or family. Public shelters will be available but they are not ideal places to spend much time, especially while under stress.

Residents in areas damaged by a hurricane may find water, electricity, roads and other services cut off for a few days after the storm has passed. Support from FEMA will not be available for the first few days. Support from state and other agencies may not be immediately available, due to damaged roads or bridges, flooding, or other hazards. For that reason, all residents – even those in inland areas – should be ready to be self-sufficient for up to three days.

Residents can prepare now by keeping, at a minimum, the following items in a safe place:

- Three days' supply of non-perishable food and water.
- Several days' supply of any needed medications.
- Diapers, prescription drugs and other specialty items.
- A battery-powered radio and extra batteries. When services are cut off, your radio will be a lifeline to information about recovery efforts.
- A supply of cash. If power is out, ATMs may not be working.

“NJOEM is constantly looking to improve upon our emergency response and recovery plans,” State Police Deputy Superintendent of Homeland Security Lt. Colonel Drew Lieb said. “Making sure our residents are prepared is a critical component of our planning and will greatly assist our recovery efforts.”

Further preparedness information can be found on NJOEM's Web site, www.ready.nj.gov.

#