Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks Regarding Hurricane Gustav

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Friday, August 29, 2008

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here today. As you are all aware, this has been a very, very busy storm season in the Gulf of Mexico. Here in Texas, we have already dealt with two significant storm events, Dolly and Edouard, that did their share of damage in our coastal areas. In both cases, our state’s efforts, working with local leaders and first responders, played a key role ensuring that there was not a single life lost during those storms. Those efforts have accelerated the progress those communities have made in rebuilding their lives.

In a nutshell, our approach here in Texas is to prepare for the worst and pray for the best. Rather than gamble that a storm might follow the most favorable predicted path, we prepare for a direct impact then manage our way up from that. That is why we get rolling early on efforts like activating troops, pushing fuel into coastal areas, prepositioning buses and making shelters ready to receive evacuees as well as standing up and staffing our 24-hour operations centers.

Right now, we are keeping a very close eye on the latest hurricane to enter the Gulf of Mexico and making preparations to deal with Gustav. Leading the preparation efforts is our capable and proven Division of Emergency Management led by Chief Jack Colley and Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw. This veteran group has spent the last several years training and deploying our statewide team of first responders, state agencies, community leaders, Texas Military Forces and our many invaluable private sector partners.

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These private sector partners are an essential part of our efforts as their regular distribution networks are well suited to quickly position resources like ice, water, food and fuel into areas that need them most. For the past few days, our entire team has been implementing our proven operational plan, placing key personnel on standby, and moving resources toward the anticipated area of impact. These resources include buses for potential evacuations, military personnel and aviation assets, medical personnel, and our state’s search and rescue teams. This week, I issued disaster declarations for 61 Texas counties, a step that allows us to move assets into place and get the necessary paperwork done for the speediest possible response and recovery.

So, now, we will continue to watch the storm closely and ramp up our efforts as conditions dictate, so that we will be ready regardless of what Mother Nature sends our way. I encourage Texans and visitors to our state to do the same. Now is the time to make sure you have a full tank of gas, necessary prescription medicines and batteries in your radio to keep track of the storm and guidance from local leaders. I also encourage you visit our updated web site at governor.state.tx.us for information on the progress of preparedness efforts.

I have also spoken with my friend, Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal to discuss preparations and to reiterate our state’s commitment to our longstanding relationship of mutual support. This includes preparations for Texas to provide shelter for up 10,000 Louisiana evacuees as soon as needed.

Working together, I am confident that Texas will be more than equal to the challenge that is headed our way.