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## **News Release**

### **Georgia Mobilizes Recovery Plan in Hurricane Matthew's Wake**

(ATLANTA) – The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency is coordinating the state's response to destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew, urging caution and patience as state, federal and local partners survey damage, help citizens in need and address safety hazards.

Matthew, a Category 2 hurricane when it hit Georgia Friday night, swamped coastal areas with high storm surge, high winds and heavy rains. GEMHSA's State Operations Center is working with local governments to implement a phased re-entry plan into evacuated zones.

Approximately 518,000 residents live in the mandatory evacuation zone – coastal Georgia east of I-95 – and approximately 1.04 million live in the six coastal counties where evacuation was mandated or recommended.

GEMHSA Director Jim Butterworth said that until authorities determine that residents and property or business owners can safely return, all non-essential persons are prohibited from evacuated areas.

“State, local and federal officials are working extremely hard to help areas impacted by hurricane Matthew,” said Butterworth. “The mission is to do that as quickly and thoroughly as possible. But our focus is on the public's safety. It will take time, likely days, to restore power, inspect bridges and clear and repair roads. We recognize evacuees are eager to return home and appreciate everyone's patience and focus on personal safety as we ensure it is safe to do so.”

Updates on the hurricane response include:

#### **Recovery and Re-entry**

- The phased re-entry plan for evacuated areas is implemented in coordination with local emergency and public safety officials.
- Re-entry task-force teams staffed with debris-clearing, road, security and medical specialists began working at daylight in hard-hit areas. Utility crews are also positioned to enter affected areas as roads are cleared of debris and downed trees. The primary objective is to ensure areas are safe for first responders to conduct life-safety operations.
- Re-entry of evacuees is dependent on restoration of public safety and medical services. Local officials will determine when a county or parts of it are relatively safe to access by the general public.

- A mandatory evacuation remains in effect for areas east of I-95 in six coastal counties: Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn and Camden.
- A voluntary evacuation order remains in effect west of I-95 in those counties.
- For a list of county and municipal contacts, go to [www.gemhsa.ga.gov](http://www.gemhsa.ga.gov) and select a county in the “Contact Your Local Emergency Management Agency” section.

### Roads

- Georgia Department of Transportation crews are working to check, clear and repair roads and bridges. The priority is to clear interstates and state routes first and then they will support local governments clearing debris.
- The Sidney Lanier Bridge in Brunswick and Talmadge Memorial Bridge in Savannah were closed in advance of Matthew and must be inspected for damage before being re-opened.
- I-16 from U.S. 301 near Statesboro to Savannah is closed eastbound – all westbound lanes are open.
- For updates on road conditions, check [www.dot.ga.gov/DS/Emergency/Hurricane](http://www.dot.ga.gov/DS/Emergency/Hurricane) or local government websites.
- Please call 511 to report road flooding or debris.

### Shelter

- As of this morning, 17,111 evacuees are sheltered across the state. The American Red Cross opened 37 shelters across the state for 6,570 people. State parks are sheltering 10,541.
- Visit [www.gemhsa.ga.gov](http://www.gemhsa.ga.gov) or call 1-800-Red-Cross (800-733-2767) for the latest information on shelters, including animal-friendly shelters.
- Information about state park closures, space availability and reservations can be found at [www.gastateparks.org](http://www.gastateparks.org).
- Hotels across Georgia were reporting full capacity Friday.
- In advance of the storm, 917 long-term-care patients were moved, and 116 patients were relocated from Camden and Brunswick hospitals. Also, in all more than 5000 people in affected areas were evacuated some using contracted buses.

### Power

- At 7 a.m. Georgia Power Company and electric cooperatives were reporting approximately 344,000 customers without power, with nearly 100 percent outage in Chatham and Glynn counties.

Governor Nathan Deal declared a State of Emergency for 30 counties. On Thursday, the president issued an Emergency Declaration for Georgia to provide direct federal assistance which includes search and rescue, shelter, security and food, ice, water at central distribution points for the public.

As part of the Office of the Governor, GEMHSA works with local, state and federal governments, in partnership with the private sector and faith-based community, to protect life and property against man-made and natural emergencies. In addition, GEMHSA employees are on 24-hour call statewide to assist local authorities when disaster strikes. GEMHSA’s Ready Georgia campaign helps Georgians prepare for disasters. Go to [www.ready.ga.gov](http://www.ready.ga.gov) or download the free Ready Georgia app for information on developing a custom emergency plan and Ready kit.