



# USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



Date: September 7, 2004  
0700 Hours

**Topic:** Hurricane Frances - Federal Interagency Wildland Fire Community Response

**Background:** Briefing

Hurricane Frances made landfall on the east coast of Florida along the St. Lucie/Martin County line on September 4, 2004 as a Category 2 hurricane with winds of 105 mph. President Bush issued a federal disaster declaration for Florida later that night.

As the hurricane moved inland, winds decreased and Frances was downgraded to a tropical storm – however widespread wind and flood damage was left in its path. This storm impacted areas affected by the destructive Hurricane Charley three weeks ago. In addition, Hurricane Ivan (Category 3) is under close watch as it moves towards Puerto Rico and the southern United States.

## **USDA Forest Service Role:**

The size and scope of this hurricane response mission is unprecedented.

The mission assignment from FEMA in keeping with the National Response Plan includes the following:

- Area Command Team (Rex Mann), working directly with FEMA Regional Operation Center (ROC). The team has been operating from Atlanta but plans to move to the Disaster Field Office in Orlando September 7. A Deputy Area Commander will stay at the ROC in Atlanta.
- Six (6) Type 1 Incident Management Teams (IMT). The IMTs have been deployed to assist FEMA with disaster relief and the operation of Receiving and Distribution Centers, Base Camps, and logistics staging areas for essential supplies.
  - Jacksonville Naval Air Station (Kearney) – Receiving and Distribution
  - Homestead (Vail) – Receiving and Distribution / Logistical Staging Area
  - Ocala (Whitney) – Federal Base Camp
  - West Palm (Oltrogge) – Federal Base Camp
  - Orlando/Lakeland (Studebaker) – Federal Base Camp
  - McCombs' Team is staged in Atlanta awaiting assignment
- Aviation mission
  - Six (6) Type 2 Helicopters to support IMT needs
  - Five (5) Type 3 Helicopters for rapid damage assessments
- Four (4) Buying Teams
- Approximately 150 Community Relations Specialists, deployed through SACC and trained by FEMA to establish and maintain positive relationships with affected communities.

**Key Points:**

- With the unprecedented action of Area Command located directly at the FEMA ROC and the six Type 1 IMTs deployed, this mission represents the broadest application of the Incident Command System to a natural disaster or federal emergency.
- FEMA has requested Area Command to create a plan of relocation for the Disaster Field Office, the Incident Management Teams, and Area Command in the event that Hurricane Ivan threatens the area. The plan will move personnel back to Atlanta.

**Storm Impact on National Forest System Land:**

Weather, road conditions, and safety considerations have prevented a detailed in-depth damage assessment of the National Forests in Florida.

Preliminary limited ground reconnaissance shows that both districts on the Ocala NF have sustained consistent areas of downed tree stands. Approximately 3,000 acres of salvage (sand pine) is expected. Hand crews have been ordered to begin the clearing effort, but the work is not expected to be completed for at least 14 days. All power lines to recreation areas are down and will need to be reconstructed. One small recreation facility has been lost. Assessment of road damage will not occur until the flooding subsides. No injuries have been reported.

Preliminary damage assessment of the Osceola NF is not yet available.

Because the storm turned east of Tallahassee, the Apalachicola NF appears to have been spared major damage.

In-depth damage assessments of the National Forests in Florida will occur later this week.

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