



# DisasterHelp— A resource for disaster control and prevention initiatives

The September issue of *Fair & Equitable* covered the Hurricane Katrina disaster, a wildfire, and the impact that natural disasters have on communities. Disasters that affect our daily living circumstances seem to happen more frequently these days. The best we can do is be prepared when disasters occur.

One of the most comprehensive resources for keeping informed about disaster response initiatives is [www.disasterhelp.gov](http://www.disasterhelp.gov).

## What Is DisasterHelp?

The DisasterHelp Web site is part of President Bush's Disaster Management E-gov Initiative—a larger initiative aimed at greatly enhancing disaster management on an interagency and intergovernmental basis.

*The Disaster Management initiative uses cutting-edge information technology to improve the delivery of disaster assistance information and services by creating a single Internet-based portal to serve the public's requirement for assistance, and the government's requirement to provide disaster information and services. The public side of the portal is a single location where the public and private businesses can easily access disaster information and services provided by government agencies and non-governmental organizations.*

*The government side of the portal provides a layered, secure environment that provides access to disaster information made available from government and non-governmental organizations, and the means to securely exchange sensitive information relating to disaster preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery. Government emergency managers can use the portal to monitor major disaster and national security events, coordinate Federal, State, and private organization responses, and collaborate on damage assessments and summaries.*

*The Disaster Management Initiative makes disaster assistance information easier to find, cuts the "red tape" for citizens to apply for disaster assistance, and eliminates redundant agency processes. Disaster services providers save considerable resources and, potentially, lives. The accelerated provision*

*of information and services to disaster victims will expedite recovery, reduce government spending, speed rebuilding, and restore public confidence.*

[www.disasterhelp.gov/](http://www.disasterhelp.gov/)

The site provides guidelines to help communities develop disaster prevention programs that promote best practices and help to reduce the severity of future disasters.

Site services include informational links related to a variety of categories including acts of terror, disease, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, food, hazardous materials, hurricanes, power outages, and tornadoes. Partners cooperating to provide information to the site include the Federal Disaster Management Agency (FEMA), the American Red Cross, and numerous U.S. federal government departments.

You can register at the site to receive alert bulletins and customize your site visit to display the information you are most interested in.

Of interest to mappers is the involvement of the new National Geospatial Programs Office (NGPO). This office coordinates geospatial resources that can be vital to help assessors evaluate damage from disasters and plan recovery efforts. You can explore their site at <http://www.usgs.gov/>. It contains some very interesting hazard assessment tools that can help identify areas at risk for reduction in property values as a result of disasters.

While on the site, you might see an interesting tidbit related to the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. The oil spill affected areas of the Kenai peninsula that were visited by recent attendees at the IAAO annual conference.

### Fact of the Day

*Some of the oil residues on the rocks along the shoreline of western Prince William Sound did not come from the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989, but from oil that was spilled years earlier when the Alaska earthquake of 1964 ruptured storage tanks in the Port of Valdez.*

[www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)