



FEMA

# National Situation Report

**As of 5:30 a.m. Wednesday, September 21, 2005**

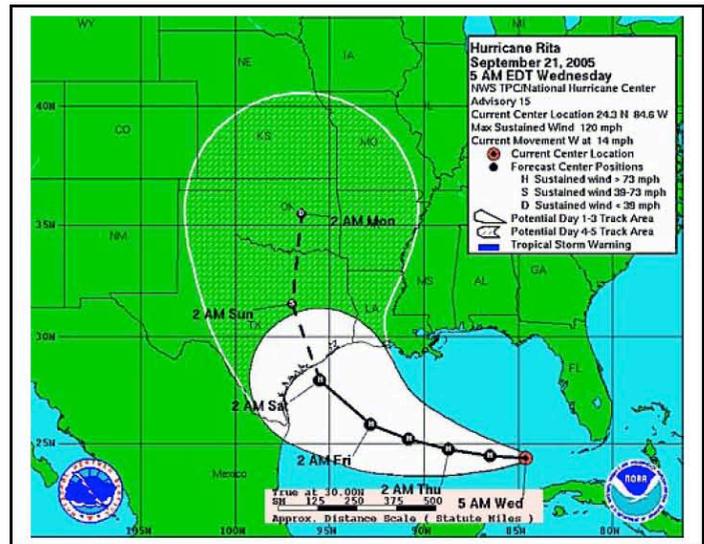
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**Homeland Security Threat Level:**

**ELEVATED**

## Hurricane Rita Hits Florida – Roars Towards Texas

As forecasted, Hurricane Rita hit the Florida Keys on Tuesday with close to 100 mph winds and heavy rainfall that caused flooding and other storm damages. Initial reports indicate the storm's effects in the Keys were not severe. Media reports indicate residents of the Florida Keys will be allowed to return to their homes on Thursday morning. Rita continues to blow westward into the Gulf of Mexico as a Category 3 Hurricane and is expected to gain strength during the next 24 hours. There is a mandatory evacuation still in effect for all of the Florida Keys. Local officials indicate several thousand residents and visitors have evacuated the area. Approximately 13,000 residents remain in the Keys.



The Tropical Storm Warning for portions of the Florida Keys is discontinued east of the Marquesas Keys including Key West. A Tropical Storm Warning remains in effect for the Florida Keys from the Marquesas Keys westward to the Dry Tortugas.

At 5:00 am EDT Wednesday the center of Hurricane Rita was located near latitude 24.3 north, longitude 84.6 west or about 175 miles west of Key West, Florida. Rita is moving toward the west near 14 mph and this general motion is expected to continue for the next 24 hours. On this track, Rita will move away from the Florida Keys and into the southeastern Gulf of Mexico.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 120 mph with higher gusts. Rita is now a Category 3 Hurricane and is expected to strengthen to a Category 4 sometime later today. Hurricane force winds extend outward up to 45 miles from the center and Tropical Storm force winds extend outward up to 140 miles. Coastal storm surge flooding from 4-6 feet above normal tide levels is possible in the Tropical Storm Warning area. Storm surge flooding elsewhere in the Florida Keys and south Florida should subside today. Rita may produce 1-3 inches of rainfall in the Florida Keys and the southern Florida Peninsula. *(National Hurricane Center)*

### **Local/State/Federal Preparedness Efforts for Rita**

The National Weather Service long range forecast indicates Rita will make landfall on the Texas coast by Saturday – most likely in the Galveston area. Texas officials have begun preparatory actions. Mandatory evacuation orders will be issued for several Texas coastal counties on Wednesday. Galveston will begin to evacuate nursing homes and assisted living residents Wednesday morning at 7:00 am EDT. A mandatory evacuation for the rest of Galveston will commence Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm EDT. Texas state officials have identified buses that will be used for evacuations. They have also identified evacuation routes and shelters that will be used by evacuees. Texas State Transportation officials have been tasked to ensure that evacuation routes are clear and flowing. Texas Department of Public Safety assets will assist with evacuation efforts. Texas has also requested the immediate return of all assets currently deployed to Louisiana.

Louisiana officials have developed contingency plans for the storm's actions. For planning purposes, the distance from Galveston (TX) to the Texas/Louisiana border is 85 miles, and the distance from the Texas/Louisiana border to New Orleans (LA) is 235 miles.

Local, State, and Federal officials in New Orleans have stopped any plans to bring residents back to the flooded city. Instead, they have warned residents to prepare to evacuate the city and surrounding areas if Rita brings high winds and heavy rainfall to the southern Louisiana area.

State, and Regional and Federal Emergency Operations Centers in the Gulf Coast area continue to maintain 24/7 operations to prepare for Rita's landfall in Texas. Emergency Response teams and supplies and equipment continue to be deployed to areas near the Gulf Coast areas.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff has designated Rear Admiral Larry Hereth, DHS U.S. Coast Guard to serve as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) to manage the federal response to Hurricane Rita. Local, State of Texas, and Federal officials are coordinating the response efforts from a Joint Field Office located in Austin, Texas. FEMA has staged truckloads of water, ice, food, tarps, and generators at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. Joint Field Offices in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are developing contingency plans for Hurricane Rita. *(National Hurricane Center, DHS, FEMA Region IV and Region VI, media sources)*

### **Other Tropical Cyclone Activity**

In the Atlantic at 5:00 am EDT Wednesday, Philippe (downgraded to a Tropical Storm) was located about 325 miles east-northeast of the Leeward Islands. The storm is not expected to threaten any U.S. interests.

In the Eastern and Central Pacific, Hurricane Kenneth (11E) has been downgraded to a Tropical Storm. Hurricane Jova (10E) does not pose any threat to any U.S. interests at this time. Hurricane Jova is forecast to remain east of the Hawaiian Islands. Tropical Storm Kenneth is predicted to continue to gradually weaken over the Pacific Ocean. Hurricane Max currently does not threaten any U.S. interests. *(National Hurricane Center, Joint Typhoon Warning Center)*

## Weather Forecast for the U.S.

**Midwest.** Other than a few scattered thunderstorms, most of the region will enjoy dry weather and pleasant temperatures with highs ranging from the 70s in the northern tier to the 90s in the central Plains. Cooler weather is forecast for Thursday and Friday.

**Northeast.** Warm and sunny weather is forecast for most of the region on Wednesday with highs ranging from the 60s in northern Maine to the 80s in southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic area.

**South.** Isolated thunderstorms are forecast for coastal areas from North Carolina to central Florida. In most parts of the South on Wednesday, high temperatures will be the 90s-100s. On Tuesday, Hurricane Rita will hit southern Florida with high winds, heavy rainfall, and storm surges. A cold front is moving into the South that will bring showers to parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas. Elsewhere in the South, the weather will be hot and dry with highs in the 90s. Other parts of the Gulf Coast are warned to keep a close watch on Rita's path.

**West.** Most of the region will be sunny and warm on Monday. Scattered rainfall could occur in selected areas, including: northwest Washington, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. High temperatures will range from the 40s in the northern tier to 100 in the southwest desert area. (*National Weather Service, Media Sources*)

## Wildfire Update

**National Preparedness Level:** 4 (on a scale of 1 to 5)

**Current Situation:** Fire activity was light with 127 new fires reported. Two new large fires were reported: one in Alabama and one in Utah.

**Fire Threat:** Very high to extreme fire indices continued in California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. A fire weather watch is in effect for dry lightning and gusty winds in western Utah.

**Weather Forecast:** The cut-off low pressure system off the central California coast will move onshore on Tuesday. Showers and thunderstorms will develop over portions of California, the Four Corners area (AZ, NM, CO, UT), the Great Basin, and Wyoming. (*National Interagency Fire Center*)

## Earthquake Activity

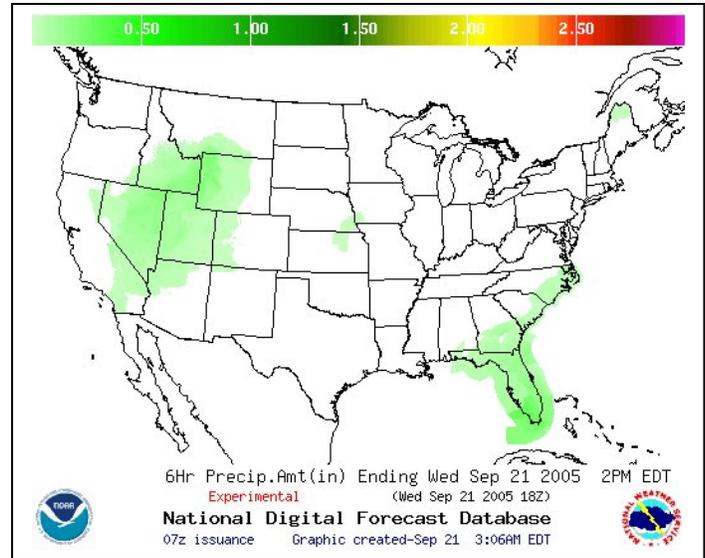
In the previous 24 hours, there have again been several minor earthquakes reported in Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, southern and central Alaska, Mt. Saint Helens area (Washington), Utah, and in southern, central, and northern California. There were no reports of any damages or injuries. (*USGS National Earthquake Information Center*)

## Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs)

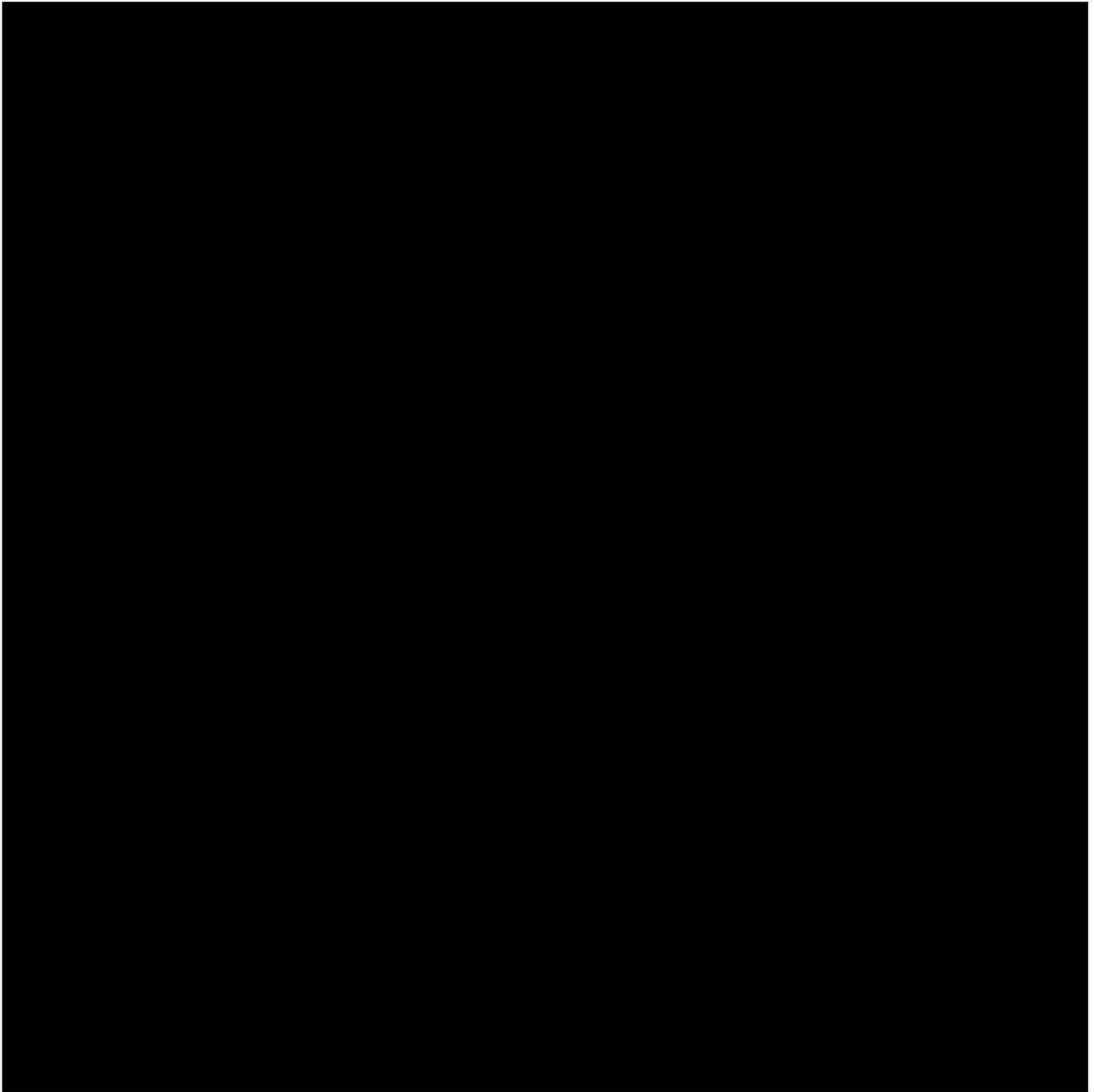
No new activity to report. (*FEMA HQ*)

## Disaster Declaration Activity

FEMA-3259-EM declared for Florida for Hurricane Rita emergency measures. (*FEMA HQ*)



**FEMA Readiness Alert Status:**





## DISASTER DECLARATIONS (12)

**1605-AL**

FCO: Michael E. Bolch  
Phone: 334-270-7722

**1604-MS**

FCO: William Carwile  
Phone: 770-220-5600

**1603-LA**

FCO: William Lokey  
Phone: 940-898-5433

**1601-LA**

FCO: Sandra Coachman  
Phone: 504-613-3391

**1600-KS**

FCO: Thomas J. Costello  
Phone: 816-283-7600

**1599-WY**

FCO: Michael Karl  
Phone: 307-685-8600  
Closing September 23, 2005

**1598-UT**

FCO: Carlos Mitchell  
Phone: 801-578-4000  
Closing September 23, 2005

**1597-ND**

FCO: Anthony Russell  
Phone: 701-250-4140

**1593-AL**

FCO: Michael E. Bolch  
Phone: 334-270-7722

**1591-ME**

FCO: James N. Russo  
Phone: 207-771-2100  
Closing September 30, 2005

**1585-CA**

FCO: David Fukutomi  
Phone: 626-431-3000

**1577-CA**

FCO: David Fukutomi  
Phone: 626-431-3000

## EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS (48)

**3212-LA**

FCO: William Lokey  
Phone: 940-898-5433

**3213-MS**

FCO: William Carwile  
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**3214-AL**

FCO: Ron Sherman  
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**3215-AR**

FCO: Gary Jones  
Phone: 501-217-2413

**3216-TX**

FCO: Gary Jones  
Phone: 512-908-8700

**3217-TN**

FCO: Paul Fay  
Phone: 615-741-2727

**3218-GA**

FCO: Paul Fay  
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**3219-OK**

FCO: Carlos Mitchell  
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**3220-FL**

FCO: Justin DeMello  
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**3221-WV**

FCO: Patricia G. Arcuri  
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**3222-NC**

FCO: Paul Fay  
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**3223-UT**

FCO: Douglas A. Gore  
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**3228-OR**

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**3243-NV**

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**3244-ID**

FCO: John Pennington  
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**3245-NE**

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**3246-CT**

FCO: Kenneth Horak  
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**3247-ND**

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**3249-WI**

FCO: Janet Odeshoo  
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**3250-OH**

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**3252-MA**

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**3253-MT**

FCO: Douglas Gore  
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**3254-NC**

FCO: Shelley Boone  
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**3255-RI**

FCO: Kenneth L. Horak  
Phone: TBD

**3256-ME**

FCO: Kenneth L. Horak  
Phone: TBD

**3257-NJ**

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Humphrey  
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**3258-NH**

FCO: Kenneth L. Horak  
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**3259-FL**

FCO: Justin DeMello  
Phone: TBD

The FEMA National Situation Report is prepared by the FEMA National Response Coordination Center (NRCC). Questions can be addressed to NRCC watch officers via phone at 202-646-2828/4541 (staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), via fax at 202-646-4617, or via e-mail at [FEMA-NRCC@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-NRCC@dhs.gov).