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EPA Ready to Support FEMA, State Efforts on Hurricane Delta

DALLAS - (Oct. 8, 2020) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an organized emergency response program for responding to man-made and natural disasters and is positioned to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), state, local, and tribal partners in response to Hurricane Delta.

As Hurricane Delta moves across the Gulf of Mexico, the risk of dangerous flooding continues. EPA is monitoring the storm response closely and has made preparations to activate in order to support states and regions affected by the storm if requested. The agency continues to coordinate closely with local, state, tribal, and federal partners and stands ready to assist either through a FEMA mission assignment or within its own jurisdiction and authority, as necessary and appropriate.

Floodwaters may contain many hazards, including bacteria and other disease agents. Precautions should be taken by anyone involved in cleanup activities or any others who may be exposed to flood waters. These precautions include heeding all warnings from local and state authorities regarding boil water notices, swimming advisories, or other safety advisories. In addition to the drowning hazards of wading, swimming, or driving in swift floodwaters, these waters can carry large objects that are not always readily visible that can cause injuries to those in the water. Other potential hazards include downed power lines and possible injuries inflicted by animals displaced by the floodwaters.

EPA supports hurricane preparedness and response in a number of ways, including:

Addressing Fuel Shortages: The Clean Air Act allows EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler, in consultation with Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette, to waive certain fuel requirements to address shortages that occur as a result of the storm. If Administrator Wheeler determines that extreme and unusual fuel supply circumstances exist in a state or region as a result of the hurricane, a temporary waiver can help ensure an adequate supply of fuel is available in the affected area, particularly for emergency vehicles. EPA has an experienced team standing by to expedite handling of any fuel waiver requests by the states.

Monitoring Public Water Systems: Water systems can be severely impacted during hurricanes due to storm surge, flooding, or loss of power. We are in contact with both the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and Florida Department of Environmental Protection as they assess the damage. If requested, EPA can assist the states with conducting damage assessments of both drinking water and wastewater systems to identify impacts to critical assets and assist in the recovery.

Securing Superfund Sites: EPA assesses conditions at the National Priorities List (NPL) Superfund sites in the storm's pathway, and tasks each Superfund NPL remedial site manager to assess conditions and make on-site preparations for high winds and heavy rainfall. Following the storm and receding floodwaters, EPA conducts rapid assessments to identify damage at sites and initiate cleanup plans if necessary. In addition, freeboard for lagoons or ponds is increased to accommodate forecasted rainfall if possible.

Assessing Conditions at Major Industrial Facilities: EPA assesses conditions at the major industrial facilities in the storm's pathway to identify potential impacts and countermeasures. Following the storm and receding floodwaters, spills and releases meeting or exceeding reportable quantities are reported to the National Response Center. The NRC notifies US Coast Guard or EPA based on preapproved jurisdiction boundaries. EPA conducts follow up inspections and damage assessments in response to reports within EPA jurisdiction based on the size and nature of the incident.

For additional information on EPA's fuel waivers, please visit: www.epa.gov/enforcement/fuel-waivers.

EPA's central hub for disaster and hurricane information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/hurricanes>.

For information on EPA's emergency response capabilities, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response>.

For information on FEMA's hurricane preparedness guidance, please visit <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>.

For more information on preparing for floods, visit <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/flooding>.

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