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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS PRESS BRIEFING
ON DEBRIS MANAGEMENT IN THE GULF COAST

PRESS BRIEFING

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Environmental Protection Agency
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Ruth McCulley, Director of Science, Technology and Medicine,
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Dave Tenny, Deputy Under Secretary of Natural Resources on
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Dave Gagner, Chief of Staff, Natural Resources
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Charles Chisholm, Mississippi Department of Environmental
Quality

Phil Bass, Director of the Office of Pollution Control,
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

P R O C E E D I N G S

And at this time we're going to open it up to the Army Corps of Engineers, Kevin Jasper.

MR. JASPER: Good afternoon, everyone. I guess we need to start off by saying that the work that the Army Corps of Engineers is just one piece to a very large organization that is working cooperatively with the State of Mississippi and the local counties, cities and municipalities that have been drastically impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

We are here at the request of FEMA, supporting the state and the city and the counties. We have currently been assigned the debris mission in 14 counties. We are currently hauling debris in 16 of those 14 counties (sic). We have staff personnel working with the remaining counties that we've been assigned to set up and establish where we will stage or dispose of the debris that we will have to manage across the state.

With the amount of debris that is on the ground, it is an extreme undertaking, massive operation. The ramp-up that we've been able to do could be characterized as unprecedented. This is far and above what Hurricane Andrew

1 did. But we have successfully ramped ourself up to the
2 point where the Corps of Engineers themselves and their
3 contractors, with the support of the constituents, the local
4 governments and state government, we're moving an average of
5 200,000 cubic yards of debris a day.

6 Cumulatively, we've moved a total of about 1.8
7 million cubic yards to date, and in the areas that we've
8 been assigned, we expect that we could reach up to about 23
9 million cubic yards of debris.

10 That debris is primarily taken to staging sites or
11 to final disposal landfills, depending on the type of debris
12 that we have. Right now our current mission is limited to
13 public rights of way, public property, basically trying to
14 provide the necessary support to ensure emergency access to
15 public roads, routes, and make every effort possible to
16 mitigate any safety hazards that may exist on the ground.

17 To this point in the operation, we're very
18 satisfied with what we've done. The cooperation that we've
19 received from the cities and municipalities has been great.

20 They are a key to the success of the overall debris mission
21 here in Mississippi. Their ability to assist us in
22 understanding the lay of the land is key. We set our

1 staging sites up. We will segregate the debris at those
2 staging sites from either vegetative debris to construction
3 demolition debris. We have white goods, is basically the
4 refrigerators, the stoves. Then we also work with EPA to
5 handle any household hazardous waste that we have.

6 The final disposition of that debris varies
7 depending on what type of debris it is. It could be
8 anything from burning of the vegetative debris, and I must
9 point out that we have staging sites that are operating 24
10 hours a day with burning. W're doing everything we can to
11 progress as fast as possible and to get the communities back
12 up and running as soon as possible.

13 That's ultimately why we're here is to help this
14 state, the communities get back up and running as soon as
15 possible. We're not alone in our efforts. We have all the
16 federal agencies supporting this large mission, and be glad
17 to answer any questions at the end.

18 MS. WITCHER: Thank you, Kevin. Let's turn over at
19 this time to Charles Chisholm. He is the Executive Director
20 of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. He
21 can talk about what he's doing on the ground.

22 MR. CHISHOLM: Thanks, Eryn. I just want to add a

1 few comments to what Kevin had to say. First of all, I want
2 to recognize that as it regards waste management issues,
3 federal, state and local governments are working very, very
4 well together. There's been a good spirit of working
5 through these issues. There's a great deal of
6 communication, and I feel very good about how the process is
7 working with regard to waste.

8 I would just add a few things to what Kevin had to
9 say. First of all, there's a lot of waste separation going
10 on. There's a lot of volume reduction going on. We in
11 Mississippi are trying to utilize the existing waste sites
12 to the degree possible.

13 We are identifying good new sites in close
14 coordination with local governments. We're doing a great
15 deal of monitoring now of what's going on at the current
16 waste disposal sites. We do believe that we have enough
17 sites identified currently to deal with the waste that is
18 being moved, but we also expect that we will have to
19 identify additional sites.

20 I think, Kevin, you said that you all expect to
21 move about 23 million cubic yards in the areas that you're
22 responsible for. I have heard that there's probably that

1 much additional waste that will have to be managed. And I
2 think all of these numbers are subject to adjustment as we
3 all learn more.

4 But we are already planning here at DEQ in
5 conjunction with EPA to identify additional waste sites as
6 well. And Eryn, I'd like to give Phil Bass here an
7 opportunity to add to any of comments as he feels necessary.

8 MR. BASS: Just very quickly --

9 MS. WITCHER: Phil, can you just give us your
10 title?

11 MR. BASS: Yeah. I am Director of the Office of
12 Pollution Control here at DEQ. We have worked, as Charles
13 said, very closely with the local authorities in
14 Mississippi. The counties, the local officials have
15 ultimate responsibility for siting these things, not the
16 state. The state has to give the environmental permits, but
17 the counties have to tell us where they want them, where
18 they're willing to accept them. And we've got mechanisms in
19 place to deal with the local authorities. They're very
20 cooperative in dealing with that. I think the Corps and the
21 other contractors are just doing a great job in first
22 getting the stuff up off the ground, getting staging areas

1 where that's possible, and as Charles said, getting it
2 segregated. There's going to be a lot of
3 environmental issues that we have to deal with in the coming
4 weeks with the white goods, with the automobiles, with other
5 things, but we're putting mechanisms in place to deal with
6 those as we speak.

7 MS. WITCHER: Great. Thank you. Let's go now to
8 EPA. Stan Meiburg?

9 MR. MEIBURG: Yes. This is Stan Meiburg. And,
10 again, I'm the Deputy Regional Administrator for EPA Region
11 4, which includes Mississippi along with seven other states.
12 And our primary role in this area is to support and assist
13 Charles and Phil and the Mississippi Department of
14 Environmental Quality, along with the local governments in
15 Mississippi and the Corps of Engineers as they carry out
16 their primary responsibilities.

17 And some of the things that we have been doing to
18 try and support and assist in those roles have included such
19 things as helping with guidance on the open and closed
20 landfills, assisting the state with their operations on
21 vegetative and structural debris, the policies they've
22 issued; working to help make sure that we offer guidance on

1 the burning of debris, sharing experiences from other states
2 and other parts of the country who have had large debris
3 issues in the past, and also, again, to go to something that
4 is related that the State of Mississippi has done, which we
5 encourage and supported, has been to provide an emergency
6 permit for storage of wood waste so that could be sprayed
7 with water so it could be kept potentially useful.

8 I really want to commend the efforts of the state
9 and the county, the local governments and the Corps of
10 Engineers. As they are staging this debris, they are making
11 every effort reasonable to try to separate debris out and
12 make sure that it's properly managed.

13 We also are working to try to help facilitate
14 communication among many private parties who have been
15 calling in to ask to offer assistance in such things as the
16 building recyclers, for example, and other people who as
17 this debris is ultimately managed, want to try to use
18 creative approaches as well as to handle and appropriately
19 manage the waste that's there.

20 The other thing we've been doing in trying to
21 assist and support the state is to help with some of the air
22 monitoring. We've sent over a team to consult with the

1 state and some portable air monitors to help the state
2 provide air monitoring around some of the debris burn sites.

3 And then finally, I should mention that our direct
4 responsibility under the President's federal response plan
5 has been, together with the U.S. Coast Guard, to work on
6 recovery of hazardous materials. And we have had teams in
7 Mississippi since -- really since the hurricane, going
8 around and assessing any potential for releases of hazardous
9 materials, identifying where those might be, recovering
10 containers, getting those staged so they can be properly
11 disposed of.

12 We again operate in those areas we're in very close
13 cooperation with the Coast Guard, and I have to say that the
14 cooperation there, the training in emergency response with
15 the Coast Guard has just been outstanding in our region.

16 MS. WITCHER: Thank you, Stan. Let's turn it over
17 to Ruth McCulley, the Director of Science, Technology and
18 Medicine for OSHA.

19 MS. McCULLEY: All right. Thank you. Again, I
20 echo what others have said about really the cooperative
21 nature of this activity with our federal and state and local
22 partners. From a OSHA perspective, we have been involved in

1 debris reduction activities in two ways.

2 One is since the storm passed on August 30th, we
3 have had staff on the ground working with power restoration
4 and mobile debris crews who are removing debris. We are
5 focusing on working with these crews on a one-on-one type of
6 nature, providing technical assistance to them as they
7 proceed with their work.

8 And the second area that we're working with is
9 we're working closely on a daily basis with EPA and the Army
10 Corps of Engineers and the State of Mississippi in their
11 planning activities for debris removal in the state. And
12 this includes the review of safety and health plans for the
13 removal and transport of debris.

14 In addition, we are contacting each county debris
15 specialist in Mississippi to identify the specific locations
16 of each disposal and reduction site where we will be
17 available to give briefings to crews on specific health and
18 safety hazards associated with tree removal.

19 Again, we are operating in a way of providing
20 technical assistance. This is both by providing assistance
21 on the ground as well as providing factsheets in both
22 English and Spanish to those workers who are working

1 Mississippi.

2 The major hazards that we are concerned with right
3 now are those that are dealing with debris operations in
4 roadways, and we're focusing on roadway work zone safety.
5 As you can imagine, roadways are clogged. We want to make
6 sure that people are working safely and that they're visible
7 as they're doing this work.

8 And the second area really deals with chainsaw
9 safeties and personal protective equipment assessment and
10 recommendations.

11 So far, thus far in Mississippi, we have provided
12 health and safety assistance to nearly 650 crews, and we've
13 distributed almost 4,800 factsheets to individuals.

14 MS. WITCHER: Great. Thank you. USDA?

15 MR. TENNY: This is Dave Tenny. I'm the Deputy
16 Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment
17 over the forestry part of the Natural Resources and
18 Environment mission, and I'm joined by Dave Gagner, who is
19 the Chief of Staff of the Natural Resources Conservation
20 Service.

21 I'll speak to what the Forest Service is doing, and
22 then turn the balance of the time over to David.

1 First of all, I want to join in what others have
2 said about the level of cooperation and support that we've
3 seen on the ground among the federal, state and local
4 entities that are working on this.

5 The Forest Service's primary mission has been to
6 provide instant command and logistical support for all the
7 other missions that are going on throughout the region, and
8 currently has about 4,000 people on the ground right now
9 doing the incident management and logistical support.

10 And I would note that this is the largest sustained
11 nonfederal wild land firefighting deployment of the incident
12 command system from the federal government in the history of
13 the United States. So this is quite an undertaking that
14 these folks have been involved in. And they are providing
15 everything from the showers and the catering services and
16 the radios to other support for the movement of food and
17 other necessities and materials throughout the region.

18 On the national forest system end, the national
19 forests of Mississippi have now completed debris removal on
20 all the primary and secondary roads of the national forest
21 system. And I would add that they've done that without
22 injury or without notable injury, so they have worked in a

1 very quick and very efficient and very safe manner.

2 And that operation now is completed, and the
3 incident management system is continuing to support all the
4 ongoing operations in Mississippi and throughout the rest of
5 the region.

6 I'll turn the time over to Dave Gagner to expand on
7 what the NRCS is doing.

8 MR. GAGNER: Hi. This is Dave Gagner. I'm the
9 Chief of Staff for the Natural Resources Conservation
10 Service. Our state -- compliments on our end go out to all
11 of our partners, but in terms of headquarters here, the
12 individual I'd like to compliment the most would be Homer
13 Wilkes, our state conservationist. And, Homer, were you
14 able to get on the phone call?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. GAGNER: I was hoping -- he's the one that can
17 speak best to the issues that our agency has taken on
18 Mississippi. But the Natural Resources Conservation Service
19 uses the Emergency Watershed Protection Program and works
20 with the Farm Service Agency, another one of our sister
21 agencies here at USDA, on the emergency conservation
22 program. Those programs can deal with both debris and

1 carcass removal. So far, our first focus after the
2 hurricane was in carcass removal, and debris on farm removal
3 as well.

4 In terms of the carcass removal in Mississippi,
5 we've disposed of over six million birds, poultry and a
6 small amount of other livestock through current practices
7 working with the Army Corps and state agencies, as well as
8 local conservation districts. We've now basically moved on
9 to debris removal on farm and are using the programs,
10 emergency watershed protection and the emergency
11 conservation program to do those. And that's where we're
12 currently at.

13 MS. WITCHER: Thank you. Coast Guard. Claudia,
14 have you been able to join us?

15 THE OPERATOR: No ma'am, she has not joined.

16 MS. WITCHER: Okay. And have we missed any other
17 federal agencies or state representatives?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. WITCHER: Okay. Operator, can we open this up
20 to questions and answers, please?

21 THE OPERATOR: I think we have Claudia on line.

22 MS. WITCHER: Oh, Claudia. Great.

1 THE OPERATOR: I'll open her line.

2 MS. WITCHER: Claudia Gelzer is lieutenant
3 commander with the Coast Guard.

4 THE OPERATOR: Claudia, your line is open.

5 MS. WITCHER: Claudia, we can't hear you.

6 THE OPERATOR: Give us just a moment.

7 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. I think we're going to
8 have to go ahead and open it to Q&A. We just can't seem to
9 hear it.

10 THE OPERATOR: Okay. Her line is open. Claudia,
11 your line is open.

12 MS. GELZER: I'm sorry, you guys. This is the
13 Coast Guard. We had some technical difficulties.

14 Just quickly, the Coast Guard's focus in debris
15 removal really is more related to focusing, you know, we've
16 been working with the EPA and DEQ and the local county
17 government, because there's obviously a large number of both
18 commercial and recreational boats that were either, you
19 know, sunken right in the navigable waters, or were thrown
20 out onto the shorelines and up into the marshes.

21 And we have done assessments and have identified
22 upwards of 350 boats that have potential for oil or

1 hazardous material releases, and we're now going to remove
2 those -- the pollution from those vessels. And we're
3 working with local contractors, and we're also marking each
4 vessel with stickers so that owners and operators can know
5 who to call if they need assistance in removing their
6 vessels. And we've had a lot of luck and we're seeing that
7 the local owners are actually doing a lot to address this
8 problem, and we are taking care of the rest in terms of oil
9 and hazardous material removal.

10 MS. WITCHER: Thank you so much. Okay. We can
11 open it up to Q&A. And I'm asking that just one question
12 per reporter until we can through everyone.

13 THE OPERATOR: At this time, I would like to remind
14 everyone if you would like to ask a question, press star,
15 the number one, on your telephone key pad. I'll pause for
16 just a moment to compile the Q&A roster.

17 Your first question comes from Brad Pearson with
18 Inside OSHA.

19 MR. PEARSON: Hi. Can everyone hear me?

20 MS. WITCHER: Yes.

21 MR. PEARSON: Yes. My name is Brad Pearson. I
22 work with Inside OSHA. My question is for Ruth. It

1 specifically is in regards to the Workers Safety and Health
2 Annex that was activated last week under the national
3 response plan.

4 Is there any plans with OSHA to implement this
5 annex quicker in future emergencies?

6 MS. McCULLEY: We have been in -- we have been
7 working with FEMA and even now as we speak, it has been
8 activated, and we are sending staff to the JFO in Texas for
9 the Hurricane Rita response.

10 MR. PEARSON: Okay.

11 MS. McCULLEY: So I don't think that that's an
12 ongoing issue.

13 MR. PEARSON: Okay.

14 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from James
15 Wimberly, Private Investor.

16 MS. WITCHER: Oh, is that -- James, is that a
17 publication?

18 THE OPERATOR: James, your line is open.

19 MS. WITCHER: James, are you a reporter?

20 (No response.)

21 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Doug
22 Obey with EPA.

1 MR. OBEY: Hi. Doug Obey with Inside EPA. This
2 question is for Stan Meiburg. Do you see the need for any
3 additional federal, maybe congressional authority given to
4 EPA to waive environmental requirements? I know there's
5 been some discussion of that inside the beltway --

6 MS. WITCHER: Is this considered debris?

7 MR. OBEY: That there may be a need for additional
8 authority. And if so, where do you see that need being
9 particularly acute?

10 MS. WITCHER: Doug? Doug and everyone, this call
11 is really just for debris management, so we can talk about
12 debris, but if there -- and we are happy to help you with
13 other questions offline, but we'll just get too many --

14 MR. OBEY: Okay. Well, let me ask it this way
15 then. Is there -- do you see the need for any additional
16 federal authority to address the problem of debris
17 management?

18 MR. CHISHOLM: I'll answer just by saying that
19 we're always interested in looking at where additional
20 flexibility would enable us to help meet the environmental
21 and response needs of an emergency like this more
22 effectively, and we're clearly going to be working within

1 the Administration and with the Congress in looking at that
2 question.

3 MS. WITCHER: Great. Next question? I'm sorry.
4 One question per person.

5 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from
6 William Hurley for the Construction and Demolition Recycling
7 Magazine.

8 MR. HURLEY: Hello? Can you hear me?

9 MS. WITCHER: Yeah. Go ahead.

10 MR. HURLEY: Thank you very much. I think this is
11 for Mr. Jasper, I'm not sure. One of the tried and true
12 methods of handling this kind of disaster debris has been --
13 it never fails. The minute my phone doesn't go mute -- it
14 never -- is to volume reduce by grinding the material.

15 We understand that in Mississippi, this practice
16 has been stopped by -- we have a confirmed report that it's
17 been stopped in your state for volume reduction. Why is
18 that so?

19 MR. JASPER: Yes sir. Obviously, we will use
20 grinding as an option for volume reduction. We did have an
21 instance where we did request that the grinder operation
22 cease at a site. It was located in an area that commercial

1 businesses had some concerns. We approached it with the
2 aspect of watering it down to avoid air emissions. I think
3 at that point the decision was made locally with the
4 contractor to move that grinder to another site temporarily
5 until we could ensure that the air emissions was going to be
6 addressed appropriately.

7 MR. HURLEY: Oh, so you are going to allow --

8 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. Next question.

9 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Roger
10 Witherspoon with Black Engineer Magazine.

11 MR. WITHERSPOON: Okay. Is this only -- are you
12 guys only talking about Mississippi when you talk about the
13 volume of material, of debris collected, or is the 23
14 million cubic yards for the entire coastal affected area?

15 MR. JASPER: This is Kevin Jasper. The 23 million
16 estimate is for the portion of work that the Corps of
17 Engineers has been assigned in Mississippi, so it is
18 specific to Mississippi.

19 MR. WITHERSPOON: What about the rest of --

20 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. Next question. Only one
21 per person.

22 THE OPERATOR: The next question comes from Heather

1 Lombard with the Retech Group.

2 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. Are you a reporter?

3 MS. LOMBARD: I'm an environmental consultant.

4 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. Reporters only. Next
5 question.

6 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from John
7 Manual, the National Institute.

8 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry? Are you a reporter?

9 MR. MANUAL: Yes.

10 MS. WITCHER: What's your publication?

11 MR. MANUAL: Environmental Health Perspectives.

12 MS. WITCHER: Thank you.

13 MR. MANUEL: This question is for Charles Chisholm.

14 I'm wondering what materials will be required to be sent to
15 lined landfills as opposed to unlined landfills, and do you
16 have enough of the former?

17 MR. CHISHOLM: Okay. This is Chisholm, and I'll
18 ask Phil Bass to contribute to this. Obviously, we have a
19 number of municipal solid waste landfills, and some of this
20 material will go to those landfills. As far as the
21 availability of space, we are confident that we do not have
22 enough disposal space right now. And as I mentioned earlier

1 in my comment, we will be over the next 15 or 20 days
2 beginning to identify additional space. And Phil will just
3 add to what I've said.

4 MS. WITCHER: Great. Okay. Next question. I'm
5 sorry. Next question.

6 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Karen
7 Trebek with Civil Engineering Magazine.

8 MS. TREBEK: Hi. Yes. This is Karen Trebek with
9 Civil Engineering, and it's a question for Mr. Jasper. You
10 spoke about, you know, with the clearing of the debris in
11 the public areas, and you wanted to mitigate safety hazards.
12 Could you talk about some of the challenges involved with
13 the safety hazards?

14 MR. JASPER: Well, obviously, when you're dealing
15 with debris, it's a complex environment that we're working
16 with out there. You've got heavy equipment operating in
17 areas where the public does have access and are trying to
18 get access. So, basically, we're doing everything we can to
19 provide a safe working environment.

20 And, you know, debris has its hazards, natural
21 hazards associated with it from the extent of nails sticking
22 out, metal sticking out, a variety of things like that. So

1 the equipment, large equipment being utilized, we're trying
2 to ensure that we have safety oversight, quality assurance
3 oversight to ensure we're operating in a safe manner.

4 MS. TREBEK: Thank you.

5 MS. WITCHER: Great. Next.

6 THE OPERATOR: The next question comes from Joshua
7 Cockrell with -- Ledger.

8 MR. COCKRELL: Hi. I was curious if there are --
9 you mentioned 23 million cubic yards of debris. Are there
10 timeframes for when people -- for how long it will take to
11 get that all cleared up, or is there any sort of estimate?

12 MR. JASPER: Yes. This is Kevin Jasper.
13 Obviously, the 23 million cubic yards is an estimated
14 number, but based on what we've seen so far and the
15 effectiveness of our operation, we're hoping that within
16 eight months we'll be able to have all the debris up off the
17 ground.

18 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Tom
19 Baxter with AJC.

20 MR. BAXTER: Hello, Mr. Jasper. This is Tom Baxter
21 with the Atlanta Journal Constitution. I had hoped you
22 could elaborate a little bit more. You referred to the burn

1 site staging area and burning that is going on now. Are you
2 referring to that covered incineration method or open
3 burning? And if you're not open burning now, are you
4 contemplating that?

5 MR. JASPER: Yes sir. The type of burning that we
6 utilize is utilized in the air curtain incinerators. Our
7 contract actually does not allow the open burning. Any
8 burning we will do will be in concert with the requirements
9 that MDEQ has put out. But basically, we will use air
10 curtain incineration.

11 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Tasha
12 Eckensire with Greenwire.

13 MS. ECKENSIRE: Hi. Do you have estimates of the
14 amount of hazardous debris in each of the affect states?
15 And is there adequate infrastructure for handling this?
16 Hello?

17 MR. JASPER: Yes. This is Kevin Jasper. I have to
18 tell you that, you know, we've been on the ground for almost
19 three weeks now, and we have been assessing the situation,
20 but the evaluation of how much -- what portion of that
21 debris is hazardous waste, I don't think that we've fully
22 assessed that.

1 Now, EPA, I'll let you fill in. But from the
2 ground level at this point, I haven't heard any type of
3 assessment or numbers on that.

4 MR. MEIBURG: This is Stan Meiburg from EPA. I
5 would only add to that by saying that I think that answer is
6 correct with respect to the materials that will be separated
7 at some of the staging areas. We have been collecting a
8 large number of drums, tanks, cylinders and other containers
9 under our general assignments under the federal response
10 plan, so we do have some statistics on those that I think
11 are available on the website.

12 MS. ECKENSIRE: Thank you.

13 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Daniel
14 Glicksman, International Safety Equipment Association.

15 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. What's your publication?

16 MR. GLICKSMAN: The Washington Report.

17 MS. WITCHER: Thank you.

18 MR. GLICKSMAN: And this question is for OSHA.
19 What types of personal protective equipment are needed, or
20 do workers have what they need?

21 MS. McCULLEY: Well, first of all, you need to
22 consider the working conditions. And, for example, we are

1 in an environment of very high temperatures, so we need to
2 be careful when we're selecting PPE. But the types of PPE
3 that we're seeing that workers need are gloves, eye
4 protection, hearing protection, hard hats and chaps.

5 From our situation reports, we are finding that
6 either the workers have the personal protective equipment
7 already, or when they're informed that it is needed, the
8 operation is getting the equipment that the workers need.
9 So at this point, we're not seeing a shortage of personal
10 protective equipment for the workers down there.

11 The other piece of equipment which is also very
12 important is a Visi Vest, a visible vest that can be used
13 for work zone safety.

14 MS. WITCHER: Next.

15 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Dennis
16 Payton, Mitchell County Preparation.

17 MR. PAYTON: Good afternoon. This is Dennis
18 Payton, Mitchell Preparedness Council and radio station
19 KAUM. The question is to Mr. Jasper and/or Mr. Chisholm.
20 It is one question, two parts. On the existing landfill
21 capacity in Mississippi and the resultant cost to construct
22 new ones, will federal dollars be available to the state or

1 counties to construct the landfills once the existing ones
2 have been filled?

3 MR. JASPER: Yes. This is Kevin Jasper. That's a
4 question that I would say we need to redirect to FEMA.
5 Obviously, the federal agencies are going to work closely
6 with the state and local government to ensure all the
7 necessary assets are available to execute the debris
8 management as effectively as possible.

9 MR. PAYTON: Thanks, Kevin. Can I ask the second
10 part, ma'am?

11 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry.

12 MR. PAYTON: Thank you, ma'am.

13 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Linda
14 Roder with BNA.

15 MS. RODER: This is Linda Roder. I just have a
16 question about the status of Superfund sites, particularly
17 one site, the Agriculture Street --

18 MS. WITCHER: Linda, that's not debris. I'm sorry.
19 Do you have a debris question?

20 MS. RODER: Well, this is related to debris. The
21 one landfill, like we're wondering if it's washed away or if
22 it's being cleaned up, the Agriculture Street landfill that

1 apparently --

2 MS. WITCHER: And that is in New Orleans. Let's --

3 MS. RODER: Okay. So you're not answering that?

4 MS. WITCHER: Well, does Stan -- I mean, let's see
5 what Stan --

6 MR. MEIBURG: No. That site is in Louisiana in New
7 Orleans, and not within our regional office.

8 MS. RODER: Okay. Can I ask another question then?

9 MS. WITCHER: Yeah.

10 MS. RODER: What about the risk of -- how are you
11 addressing the risk of dioxins from burning? And are there,
12 you know, health risks, and what potentially are the health
13 risks?

14 MR. MEIBURG: This is Stan, and I'm probably not
15 the only person who could answer this, but the best way to
16 do is to make sure that as both Mississippi and the counties
17 and the Corps of Engineers mentioned, is to do good material
18 separation up front, and then good combustion control to
19 make sure that the burns will be done effectively and
20 efficiently.

21 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Jim
22 Johnson with Waste News.

1 MR. JOHNSON: I was wondering if someone could
2 speak to the possibility or probability of opening up closed
3 landfills. What's going to be involved with that, and what
4 needs to happen?

5 MR. CHISHOLM: This is Chisholm in Mississippi.
6 We're looking at all kinds of alternatives to dealing with
7 all of the debris, including the possibility of opening up
8 existing landfills. We don't know if we'll have to do that
9 or not.

10 Currently, as I said, we think we have enough space
11 for the waste that's being managed today, and we're
12 beginning to plan for what we'll be doing over the next 30
13 or 60 or 90 days. And that's just one of the
14 considerations, but there are many others.

15 THE OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Mike
16 Keller with Sun Herald.

17 MR. KELLER: Are there any federal or state
18 maximums for the amount paid out to contractors per cubic
19 yard when they bring in debris?

20 MR. JASPER: This is Kevin Jasper again. The
21 requirements for pricing of this is basically that is a
22 negotiated fair and reasonable price. Obviously, we look at

1 the balance of what has occurred in the past with a
2 reasonable rate, and then we look at the current conditions.

3 But it's basically a fair and reasonable price comparable
4 across the state.

5 MR. KELLER: Thank you.

6 THE OPERATOR: You have a follow-up question with
7 Brad Pearson with Inside OSHA.

8 MS. WITCHER: I'm sorry. Melanie, have we made it
9 through to everyone else?

10 THE OPERATOR: Yes ma'am.

11 MS. WITCHER: Is there anyone else on line that
12 would like to ask a question?

13 THE OPERATOR: We have one other person.

14 MS. WITCHER: Okay.

15 THE OPERATOR: Stephanie Tylin with Market Watch.

16 MS. WITCHER: Okay. Go ahead.

17 MS. TYLIN: Yeah, hi. Can someone -- I forget who
18 it was, but someone brought up during the remarks issues of
19 receiving calls from companies or building recyclers who
20 might be interested in some of this material possibly. Can
21 you just walk me through at what point these companies
22 become involved in the process and what that process is?

1 MR. MEIBURG: This is Stan Meiburg, and I mentioned
2 it, but I also will defer to Charles and Phil. But we have
3 -- and I'm sure the state and the Corps of Engineers
4 probably as well have had contacts from the associations in
5 building materials, recycling council I believe, that has
6 expressed interest in when the thumb is appropriate or
7 right, that they would be delighted to assist in finding out
8 if the markets will reuse some of the debris material.

9 Our job there is to provide whatever reference
10 assistance and technical assistance we can provide to the
11 state in thinking about that without in any way impeding the
12 operations to try to get the debris cleared. And Charles
13 and Phil, if you'd like to add further to that, I would
14 welcome that.

15 MR. CHISHOLM: Stan, I don't think we really have
16 much to add. We've been getting those calls. We're pleased
17 about that, and we're just putting these people in contact
18 with the local officials, the Corps of Engineers and the
19 Federal Emergency Management Agency.

20 MS. WITCHER: Great. Is there anyone who has not
21 had a chance to ask a question from a paper or publication
22 that would like to?

1 THE OPERATOR: At this time, everyone has asked a
2 question.

3 MS. WITCHER: Great. Thank you, everyone, for
4 joining us today. We will have a transcript available.
5 We'll get that around to the various agencies, but
6 definitely at www.epa.gov.

7 Thanks a lot.

8 (The press briefing concluded at 1:54 p.m.)

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