



# NEWS RELEASE

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### *SBA Stands Ready to Respond as 2006 Hurricane Season Begins*

**WASHINGTON** – With today marking the beginning of the 2006 hurricane season, the U.S. Small Business Administration stands ready to respond quickly and efficiently in the event of disaster. SBA currently has a strong disaster response operation in place, including a large roster of highly trained, experienced personnel, updated state-of-the-art equipment and enhanced logistics and coordination both internally and externally.

“As we have for over 50 years, the SBA stands prepared to help those who may be impacted by a disaster this year, especially as we enter what may be an active hurricane season,” said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. “Following last year’s devastating hurricanes, the SBA mobilized like never before, approving more than \$9.7 billion to more than 149,000 businesses, homeowners and renters and we will be prepared to do so again.”

The agency’s disaster operation centers are fully staffed with trained and experienced disaster personnel, including loss verifiers, loan processors and attorneys. Additionally, a disaster reserve corps is being established.

All equipment necessary to function in another large disaster is in place and the agency is prepared to acquire the necessary work space as needed.

The agency’s computerized disaster loan processing system known as the Disaster Credit Management System (DCMS) has been significantly upgraded and will be operational this month. By upgrading DCMS, the agency is better able to provide an expedited response to disasters, improve the quality and timeliness of disaster loan processing and reduce the cost of personnel, training, overtime and travel.

In an effort to enhance the closing and disbursement of disaster loans, the agency earlier this year issued a request for proposals for a contract with private sector companies to assist with these functions. Three companies have been selected to conduct the work.

SBA’s ability to work effectively with national, state and local organizations remains equally important as internal agency operations. To better prepare for the upcoming hurricane season, the SBA will continue to participate in a variety of planning and coordination exercises designed to strengthen and enhance disaster response tactics across the board.

“While we are doing our part to be prepared to respond to disasters, it is equally important for the public and businesses to be prepared in case disaster strikes,” said Barreto. “There are many resources readily available to guide the public through the steps to be well-prepared.”

To learn more about the SBA’s disaster assistance program and about disaster preparedness, visit [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster).