

Shelter opens in Gautier as precaution

■ Local officials keeping an eye on potential flooding problems; storm expected to dump 8 to 10 inches of rain

*MS. Press
8/24/08*

Staff Reports

Jackson County officials decided to open a shelter in Gautier as weakened Tropical Storm Fay approached.

The shelter will open at 7 a.m. today at the Gautier Convention Center and will be open until it is no longer needed.

Jackson County Emergency Management Director Butch Loper said the shelter is in the center of the area that may be most affected by anticipated heavy rain from Fay.

Loper said tropical storm watches and warnings have been canceled for areas west of the Alabama state line.

"It's a little more relief. It looks like we stand to get only rain this time, instead of wind and rain," Loper said.

On Saturday, forecasters were still waiting to see where Fay would end up, but the shelter is a precaution for those living in low-lying areas. Loper said that there could be coastal flooding early Monday morning and a storm surge of 2 to 4 feet may be a possibility. The shelter will give residents a place to get away from the water.

He said that those visiting the shelter should bring snacks to last a day and night, blankets and whatever else they might need for an overnight stay. He said food will be served Sunday night, but visitors need to bring their own snacks. Pets are not allowed, Loper said.

The shelter is located on Library Lane, one block north of U.S. 90 in Gautier.

Paige Roberts, executive director Southeast Mississippi Chapter of the American Red Cross, said plans for Tropical Storm Fay changed frequently Saturday.

At noon Saturday, Roberts said the forecast called for Fay to "stay at least a couple of days."

See **FAY**, Page 8-A



HARLAN KIRGAN/Mississippi Press

The American Red Cross will open a shelter at 7 a.m. today at the Gautier Convention Center. From left, Maury Davis, Mary Guilford and A.J. Guilford unload supplies Saturday at the center. Also assisting with the delivery were Judy Coleman, Thomas Johnson and Jacqueline Johnson. The shelter is in response to Tropical Storm Fay.

"We want people to feel safe. Don't hesitate to get out of somewhere if you don't feel safe," Roberts said in urging people to use the shelter.

The last shelter opening was in August 2007, Roberts said. There has not been an entire shelter opening since Hurricane Katrina, she said.

Shelters are also opening in Harrison and Hancock counties, she said.

Loper said that this storm will be "mainly a rain event," possibly dropping between 8 and 10 inches of rain and to watch out for rain-water flooding that will take a while to subside.

The Pascagoula City Council declared a state of local emergency Friday along with Ocean Springs. Loper said that Jackson County issued one around noon Thursday covering the county and that some cities decide to issue their own as well.

"I hope that nobody will try to get out and drive in this mess," said Jackson

County Sheriff Mike Byrd on Saturday afternoon.

Byrd urged citizens to particularly avoid low-lying areas.

The sheriff said extra patrols will be out as the storm impacts the county.

Byrd said if people have an emergency they should call 911, but other calls can be made to 228-769-3063, the sheriff's department main number.

National Seashore closes due to storm

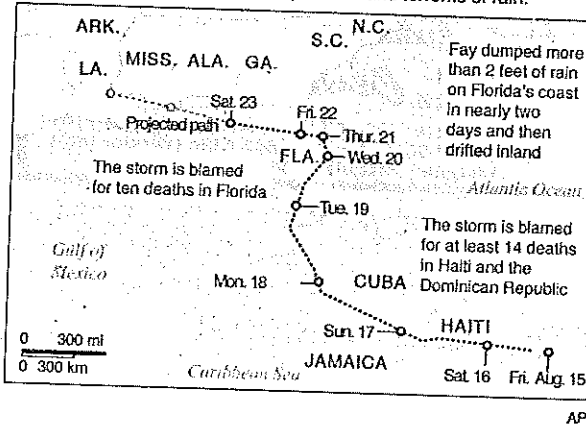
Gulf Islands National Seashore will close the Davis Bayou Area including the campground and the offshore barrier islands: Cat, Ship, Horn, and Petit Bois Islands to all public use due to the approach of Tropical Storm Fay.

All visitors at the islands were instructed to leave by 4:30 p.m. Saturday and were urged to immediately return to shore and begin safeguarding their property.

Superintendent Jerry Eubanks said, "with this tropical storm hugging the Gulf shoreline, and possibly

Fay hits Florida four times

Tropical Storm Fay has made landfall in one state, Florida, at four separate points, having slowly followed a zigzag path with sustained winds between 40 and 60 miles per hour and torrents of rain.



taking aim at the coast, we have to begin now in order to safeguard human life."

The National Park Service has to move visitors off the exposed barrier islands and close down all the island operations.

The park is also making initial preparations to close down the Davis Bayou unit

in Ocean Springs.

Gulf Islands National Seashore will reopen after the storm has passed and the staff has an opportunity to mitigate any hazards resulting from the storm, a news release said.

For more information visit the park Web site at www.nps.gov/guis.