

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2404**

February 17, 2006

Honorable Michael Chertoff  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

I am writing to follow up on our discussion at yesterday's hearing of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am concerned by your admission that the Department of Homeland Security does not have a plan of action for the 141,500 FEMA trailers that will be at risk in the upcoming hurricane season. In your testimony you said you were open to suggestions, so I am taking the liberty of offering a few recommendations for your hurricane preparedness plans for the Gulf Coast.

Hurricane season begins in less than four months. FEMA has placed more than 35,000 travel trailers and mobile homes in South Mississippi and estimates that the total will reach 43,500. Approximately 98,000 travel trailers and mobile homes eventually will be placed in Louisiana. We should expect those living in temporary housing to seek shelter inland if a hurricane approaches the region. FEMA and the states should update their transportation, communication, and sheltering plans to prepare for mass evacuation.

Hurricane evacuations are difficult enough already without the prospect of thousands of Gulf residents trying to haul their own FEMA trailers on congested highways. The federal government needs a plan for those trailers and the people who live in them. FEMA and state emergency management agencies must have a detailed plan for securing trailers in low risk areas and temporarily relocating trailers from high risk areas.

My recommendations are as follows:

1. Conduct wind tunnel tests to determine the trailers' tolerance for high wind speeds from different angles. Publicly release videotapes of the wind tests so that residents can see for themselves the risks of trying to ride out a storm in a trailer. Use the wind tunnel results to prepare separate plans for tropical storm force winds, minimal hurricanes, and major hurricanes.

2. It is not possible to relocate 140,000 trailers during an evacuation, so trailers that are not in a flood risk area will need to be tied down securely at their current sites.

Identify those areas and secure those trailers as soon as possible. This task cannot wait until hurricane season.

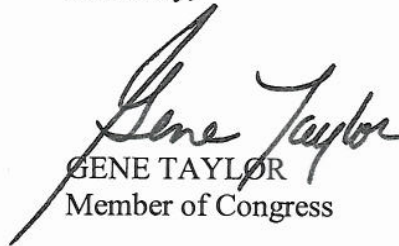
3. Designate sites outside the flood hazard areas where trailers can be relocated temporarily to ride out the storm. Prepare the sites with tie-downs in place so that trailers can be pulled in and secured quickly.

4. Prioritize lists of the trailers that need to be relocated from high risk areas. Identify contractors and prepare contingency contracts for hauling and securing trailers from flood risk areas to the temporary sites.

5. Some residents will relocate their trailers with their own vehicles. Determine the vehicle standards needed to pull travel trailers and make that information widely available to the public. Reserve spaces in the designated temporary tie-down sites for citizens to pull and secure their own trailers.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. As you know, hurricane begins June 1. Please respond to this letter within two weeks with the steps you have taken to prepare a plan for hurricane season in Mississippi and Louisiana. I also request the names of the DHS and FEMA officials who will be in charge of planning and implementing the future preparedness plan.

Sincerely,



GENE TAYLOR  
Member of Congress

GT:jbm