

## Nearly 40,000 Katrina families still in mobile homes

By Jim Loney *Wed Apr 2, 12:31 PM ET*

Almost three years after Hurricane Katrina, nearly 40,000 families still are living in vulnerable mobile homes and trailers across the U.S. Gulf Coast with another hurricane season just two months away, the top U.S. disaster official said on Wednesday.

The number is down from about 100,000 families, or some 300,000 people, in April 2006. At one point following the devastating 2005 hurricane season, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency was housing 143,000 families in mobile homes and trailers.

FEMA Administrator David Paulison said the agency, which was heavily criticized for its hapless response when Katrina swamped New Orleans, is moving about 800 families a week into hotels, motels or apartments.

The families are either living at group sites or in trailers in the driveways of their homes as they rebuild.

The six-month Atlantic hurricane season begins on June 1. Forecasters are expecting above-average storm activity.

"As far as rebuilding, I did expect it to take this long," Paulison told a small group of reporters at the National Hurricane Conference in Orlando. "But as far as housing people, I did not foresee that they would be there almost three years later."

Katrina killed 1,500 people and caused \$80 billion in damage when it swept ashore in late August 2005 near New Orleans, shattering the levees protecting the low-lying city and swamping entire neighborhoods.

The three worst storms of 2005 -- Katrina, Rita and Wilma -- together caused about \$110 billion in damages. The record-shattering season produced 28 tropical storms.

The presence of so many people in the flimsy temporary housing complicates preparations for the hurricane season because those families must be evacuated in the event of a threatening storm.

Paulison said the agency was on target to move everyone from the group sites by June 1 but was having "a lot of trouble" getting some of those displaced by Katrina to move again, even from cramped mobile homes that are often reduced to rubble in big storms.

"People simply don't want to move," he said. "It hasn't been as easy a task to get people out as we thought it might be."

(Editing by Michael Christie and Bill Trott)