

Hurricane overdue

United Press International
Residents of the Texas coast may become complacent about the serious potential of a hurricane. It has been almost eight years since a storm has caused loss of life and widespread damage on the coast.

But with a hurricane or a large tropical storm striking Texas on the coast of at least one every two years, the 367 miles of coastline is overdue. And scientists fear a hurricane at the wrong place would cause a major disaster unless precautionary steps are taken, and even sooner.

Most people consider the 100 to 150 miles per hour winds generally associated with the giant storms as most extreme danger. But according to scientists, it is the storm surge — a giant flood tide that is unquestionably the most serious part of a hurricane. The surge, according to statistics, is responsible for nine out of every 10 hurricane deaths.

Storm forces near the hurricane's core cause an abnormal rise in sea level that can range from 10 to more than 20 feet above normal tide, and is often 50 miles long.

According to a coastal transportation report recently prepared by Texas A&M University researchers, evacuation of the Texas Gulf coast islands in anticipation of a hurricane — and the resulting surge — is virtually impossible.

Four-foot tides could cut off residents of Galveston, South Padre Island, Mustang Islands — as well as Bolivar Peninsula — as far as 36 miles in advance of the hurricane's eye, said Texas Transportation Institute researcher Thomas Urbanik.

And under the best of conditions, it would take almost 13 hours to evacuate Galveston Island alone, with estimates of two hours for Bolivar and over three hours for Mustang Island.

British mail the black

United Press International
NEW YORK — The British Post Office is much more than a system of delivering mail, according to its public relations consultant, Alain de la Motte. The BPO also runs Britain's telephone and telegraph services and has been a public authority since 1969. In its 1977-78 fiscal year, the BPO made a profit of \$708-million, the highest surplus ever recorded by a public utility. The BPO is a nationalized industry, producing gas, electricity, steel, coal and other services.

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Those figures do not include the influx of thousands of tourists that visit the barrier islands during the June 1 to Oct. 15 hurricane season, he said.

"If that (report) don't scare the hell out of you, you don't live on the coast," said Galveston state Sen. A.R. Schwartz, chairman of Texas Coastal and Marine Council.

In 1900, 6,000 persons died on Galveston Island in a hurricane. It was the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States, and created largely because there was no warning of the storm's approach. The day that such a storm could strike an unsuspecting, unprepared public is long past, but Civil De-

fense officials now debate the effectiveness of early warning.

Urbanik said scientists predict that only about a third to two-thirds of the residents of an urban area would evacuate when warned about an approaching hurricane. That might rise to 100 percent in the smaller rural communities along the coast, however.

But time is again a factor. Urbanik said major escape routes such as IH 45 which runs from Galveston to Houston might be flooded by rains well in advance of the threatening 4-foot tides. And once the storm surge arrives, evacuation by roadways is impossible, he said.

Nuclear wastes on the road

United Press International
Flatbed trailers carrying casks of radioactive sludge from the crippled Three Mile Island nuclear plant to Richland, Wash., have been making their way across the heartland of America on Interstate 80 in recent weeks.

But it seems no one thought to tell police, health officials or even governors along the route they were playing host to radioactive materials from the nation's worst nuclear accident.

"They never tell us anything. You know more than we do," complained Illinois State Trooper Charles Krisik, whose unit patrols Interstate 80.

That sentiment was echoed in nearly all of the states Interstate 80 traverses on its way west:

Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho and Oregon. The cross country highway passes through or near some of the nation's larger cities: Cleveland, Chicago, Des Moines, Omaha, Cheyenne and Salt Lake City.

In all, three shipments of low-level radioactive waste have been transported in steel and lead casks on flatbed trucks to Washington state's Hanford Reservation, a government dumping ground near Richland, the NRC said Thursday.

The last two shipments made their way quietly across the nation on I-80 during the past two weekends of April. The NRC said others are planned, but no date has been set.

"It is no different from low-level radioactive materials that are transported on the highways every day," NRC spokesman Ken Clark said. An Ohio Energy Department spokesman said he was told high-radiation waste from the March accident had not yet been prepared for shipment.

In Ohio Thursday, state officials were in an uproar over news stories reporting that the last radioactive shipment slipped across the state without so much as a passing acknowledgment to the Highway Patrol or state agencies.

In Oregon, a law requiring advance notification of all nuclear waste shipments is in the legislative hopper.

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