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News Release

Georgia Mobilizes Resources Ahead of Hurricane Matthew

(ATLANTA) – Effects from Hurricane Matthew are expected to impact the Georgia coastal communities as early as Friday morning and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency is on alert coordinating the state’s preparation for Hurricane Matthew.

A mandatory evacuation is in effect for areas east of I-95 in the six coastal counties: Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn and Camden. A voluntary evacuation request remains in place west of I-95 in the same counties. A [State of Emergency](#) is in effect for 30 counties.

“Hurricane Matthew has the potential to devastate our coastal communities,” said GEMHSA Director Jim Butterworth. “We are working in partnership with state agencies and non-governmental organizations to prepare for this potentially catastrophic event. We urge coastal Georgians to take this storm very seriously and take immediate and appropriate actions to protect themselves and their families.”

All I-16 lanes between Savannah and Dublin are supporting west-bound traffic to facilitate the Governor’s evacuation order. Resources from Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Public Safety and Georgia Department of Natural Resources have been positioned along westbound state routes and I-16 to assist motorists leaving the coastal area. More information about evacuation routes and changes can be found at www.dot.ga.gov.

There are currently 23 shelters with a total capacity for 11,786 open tonight, with additional locations opening Friday. The Georgia Department of Human Services and Georgia Department of Community Affairs are working closely with the American Red Cross to ensure optimal shelter operations. Go to www.redcross.org for the latest shelter information or call 1-800-Red-Cross.

There are animal shelters co-located with human shelters in Bibb, Tift and Richmond counties. There are also animal-only shelters in Greene and Putnam counties, and equine-only shelters in Colquitt and Houston counties. Make sure animals have everything needed for a shelter stay such as veterinary paperwork, food, leash and medicine. The Georgia Department of Agriculture is coordinating and identifying animal-friendly shelters statewide as new locations are opened and can be found at www.agr.georgia.gov.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources opened state parks for displaced travelers and first responders during Hurricane Matthew. Nine coastal state parks are closed. Information about park closures, space availability and reservations can be found at www.gastateparks.org.

The Georgia National Guard will activate 365 soldiers Friday morning to support local law enforcement and public safety officials facilitating the evacuations.

As part of the Office of the Governor, GEMHSA works with local, state and federal governments, in partnership with the private sector and faith-based community, to protect life and property against man-made and natural emergencies. In addition, GEMHSA employees are on 24-hour call statewide to assist local authorities when disaster strikes. GEMHSA's *Ready Georgia* campaign helps Georgians prepare for disasters. Go to www.ready.ga.gov or download the free *Ready Georgia* app for information on developing a custom emergency plan and Ready kit.