



BASTROP COUNTY FIRE COMPLEX-----UNIFIED COMMAND NEWS RELEASE

MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATION ISSUED-PROGRESS CONTINUES

Saturday, September 10, 2011, 2:30 PM

For immediate release

As progress on the Bastrop County Fire Complex continues, State Highway 71 was re-opened today at 8 a.m. Union Chapel residents were also able to return to their homes today at 10 a.m. Judge Ronnie McDonald announced at a press conference today that a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Texas was issued by President Obama, triggering release of funds to help individuals whose homes and property were destroyed by the Bastrop Complex fires. Individuals are encouraged to register with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or:

- Those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS) can call 800-621-3362.
- Apply for disaster assistance online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov.
- Smartphone or tablet, use m.fema.gov
- FEMA's App for android phones download at market.android.com/details?id=gov.fema.mobile.android

Hotel vouchers are also available beginning today for those currently living in shelters. This allows citizens whose homes were destroyed to move from makeshift shelters into motels until more permanent housing is re-established. Vouchers may be picked up at shelters. Residents may also dial 2-1-1 for statewide services and disaster information.

Sheriff Pickering emphasized that, "Fire crews and utility crews are working hard in order to get residents back into their homes as quickly and safely as possible." He stressed that unsafe conditions prevent allowing residents to re-enter during this phase of work.

After a fire burns through a residential area, many hazards still exist because of the disruption of the infrastructure in place such as affected electrical, water, gas, telephone lines, crude oil wells, roads, dead trees and limbs, and smoldering stump holes. Re-construction and re-charge of live electrical power lines is also taking place by 120 utility crews in order to restore power so residents may return to their homes.

Fire crews are cutting and removing hazard trees that may fall at any time with light wind gusts. A night shift of firefighters is patrolling the perimeter of the fire to ensure hot spots are extinguished so that fire does not flare up. An infrared flight has been conducted for the last three nights to detect hot spots within and around the fire perimeter so firefighters can be directed to these specific areas. Law enforcement is patrolling evacuated areas at all times to prevent looting. For more information visit: www.co.bastrop.tx.us or <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu> or <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/2589/> or call **2-1-1** or **1-512-332-8814** or **8856** & 1-512-308-9724 **media only**.