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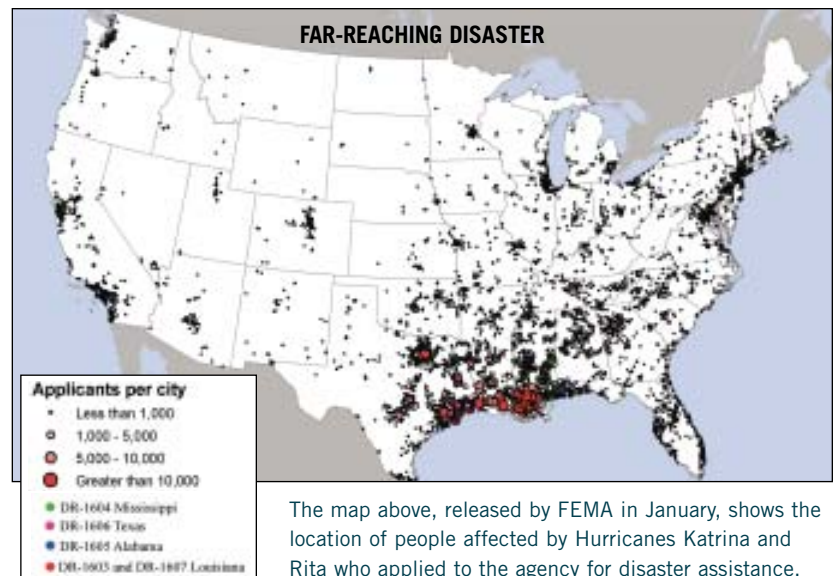
Gulf Fixation

Six months ago, Hurricane Katrina had just crossed the tip of Florida and nicked Alabama before plowing head-on into Mississippi and Louisiana. Just six months ago — a short time, relatively, but for those directly affected, it must feel like a time without end.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported in late December that “the scope of human suffering inflicted by Hurricane Katrina in the United States has been greater than that of any hurricane to strike this country in several generations.” As of late December, some 1,336 individuals had died from causes attributable to the storm, while more than 4,000 people were still reported missing. Thousands of homes and businesses comprising entire neighborhoods were destroyed by flood in New Orleans, and Katrina’s surge struck the Mississippi coastline with such ferocity that entire communities were obliterated. Over half a million homes were damaged in the region. The NHC predicts that many of the most severely impacted communities will take years to rebuild.

Six months later, we are barely into that rebuilding. Only now is much of the information about what happened coming to light. From this, we are just beginning to understand what might — and what must — be done to avoid such losses in the future. With that goal in mind — bringing clarity as to what building practices best protect coastal homes *everywhere* from damage and loss — *Coastal Contractor* will continue to devote coverage to rebuilding the Gulf throughout 2006. In this issue, Ted Cushman initiates our special feature coverage with an account of lessons learned that he gathered while lending a hand in the recovery in September. In *Breakline*, Aaron Hoover covers the risks of working in flooded homes in New Orleans and reports on the Mississippi Renewal Forum’s efforts to gather information from local residents to aid in long-term redevelopment. One of the successes coming out of that forum led to key home-design insights, as I report in the *Design* column, in this issue.

No one will feel the strain inflicted by these storms as much as the hundreds of thousands of people who have been displaced and whose lives have been so disrupted. But we have all been touched by, and still have a great deal to learn from, this storm’s far-reaching effects. — *Clayton DeKorne*



The map above, released by FEMA in January, shows the location of people affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who applied to the agency for disaster assistance.