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AUSTIN WEATHER



80 ° Cloudy

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THE BP SPILL AND HURRICANE SEASON

Austin, TX

The BP oil mess in the Gulf has added a new level of uncertainty to predicting what damages could result from this summer's storms.

Every Hurricane season, Gulf Coast communities wonder how bad things might get. This year as many as 60,000 barrels of oil spilling into the Gulf every day has changed the calculus of those predictions.

"We're worried. We're scared. It puts a new twist on what can happen, not so much just on the storm surge and just the impact of a hurricane but what happens with the environment and what's in the gulf and the environmental impact that will come with it," said State Rep. Solomon Ortiz Jr. (D- Corpus Christi).

Ortiz was at a hurricane insurance policy primer today sponsored by the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation. He's trying to get the word out to his constituency to be prepared, and get their homes insured in event of a worst case scenario. But a worst case scenario is exactly what the state subsidized Texas Windstorm Insurance Association is not prepared for.

"Today we're able to fund a storm of approximately 2.5 billion dollars, which would be larger than any storm we've experienced in the past, but it's not nearly as big as the storms we could see this year," said Jim Murphy, an actuary with the Association.

As to whether that insurance would pay for damages caused by oil brought inland by a hurricane, Murphy said he did not know.

Scientists are saying that a hurricane could push oil against parts of the gulf coast that have, so far, escaped contamination. Any major storm would also hamper efforts to stop the leak, allowing more oil to pour into the Gulf of Mexico.

That leaves State Representative Ortiz with a final piece of advice for his constituency. "Hope and pray that a hurricane doesn't come and hit our region."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting an unusually active Hurricane season in the Gulf of Mexico.

— *Mose Buchele*

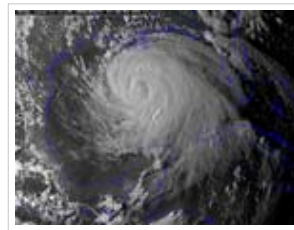
This is a news article, created Wednesday, June 16, 2010 (1 day ago). | [print](#)

Attached Files

Sounds

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*Photo of Hurricane Ike
Courtesy of on [Coreburn Flickr](#).*

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