

## **Not much to show for \$500M**

### **Red tape, bureaucracy snarls disaster housing, repair programs**

By T.J. AULDS  
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Seven months ago, Galveston County's two disaster housing assistance programs officials expected to have as many as 100 homes under construction to replace those destroyed by Hurricane Ike. Despite about \$500 million in federal aid split between the city of Galveston and the county, thousands of applicants, and construction firms ready to rebuild, only a handful of houses are actually under a construction and only about 30 are in the pipeline at the second anniversary of the storm making landfall.

Local officials blame federal regulations and state housing officials' interpretations of those rules for bogging the system down. Federal and state authorities claim the system is moving as fast as can be expected.

Those waiting to be approved for help are growing frustrated, and some have just given up.

"Through no fault of our own, the bureaucrats have controlled these programs" housing advocate Joe Compian, of Gulf Coast Interfaith, said. "Some lawyer in some department or some housing expert in another come up with new rules or new interpretations. Each month, the city and county are challenged by new requirements.

"We've seen this before in East Texas. People get so frustrated that they give up hope. When they give up hope, they move away. We are losing our citizens."