

**Federal Emergency Management Agency
PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) and Final Notice
of a Proposed Activity in a 100-Year Floodplain
for the Proposed District Heating and Cooling Project
University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, Texas**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hereby gives notice to the public of its intent to reimburse the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston, Texas for eligible costs to repair and/or replace campus facilities damaged by Hurricane Ike beginning on September 13, 2008 and to provide assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process to protect these damaged facilities from future events. This notice applies to the Public Assistance program implemented under the authority of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206.

Interested persons are hereby notified that UTMB, located at 301 University Boulevard, Galveston, Texas, has applied to FEMA for assistance to modify the UTMB district heating and cooling system and associated activities (District Heating and Cooling Project) after sustaining an estimated \$1 billion in damages, including lost revenue due to the closure of UTMB's hospital's facilities.

The Central and West Plants are currently the sources of steam and chilled water for the heating, process, and cooling needs of UTMB. The Central Plant would require substantial and major modifications to protect critical equipment and services from natural events similar to Hurricane Ike. In order to reduce the non-permanent (temporary) construction cost and to provide reliable utilities, the Central Plant functions would be relocated to a proposed elevated East Plant. Without the elevated East Plant, the district heating and cooling system future operations would remain at risk. The new East Plant would also provide the campus thermal requirements during the distribution system reconstruction. The West Plant would be repaired with critical equipment elevated and protected with floodwall. The district heating and cooling system, the electrical generation equipment, and steam and chilled water production equipment, that had to be shut down during Hurricane Ike, would be modified to assure continued service or rapid startup during or after severe weather events. Additionally, much of the current steam production requirements would be replaced by a hot water system. All buildings on campus would be converted from primary steam heating to the use of heating hot water. In a number of facilities, the use of steam heating coils in air-handling units and other air moving devices would need to be converted to heating hot water. The domestic water heaters utilizing steam would also need to be converted to heating hot water.

An additional component of the project is the construction and operation of a dedicated natural gas pipeline to UTMB. The pipeline would be constructed, maintained, and operated by the Texas Gas Service Company. It would connect the UTMB campus to a Texas Gas Service terminal located 4.2 miles west, at the 59th and Port Industrial city gate. This dedicated pipeline will segregate UTMB loads from the rest of Galveston Island. The construction and operation of a dedicated natural gas line would avoid potential UTMB service interruptions as a result of severe weather event affecting the entire Galveston community.

The purpose and need for the project is to cost effectively repair and modify UTMB's current district heating and cooling system to prevent or reduce the threat of future damages should a storm similar in size to Hurricane Ike occur, thereby, avoiding the loss of essential health care services.

This notice also serves as the Notice for Final Public Review of a Proposed Activity in the 100-Year Floodplain. This notice is provided pursuant to 44 CFR Part 9.12, (Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands), and FEMA's implementing regulation for Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, concerning FEMA's funding assistance for activities within and/or affect a floodplain. UTMB has reevaluated the alternatives to building in the floodplain and has determined that it has no practicable alternative. The proposed District Heating and Cooling Project shall comply with state and local floodplain protection procedures. The Initial Public Notice concerning FEMA actions located in or that may affect wetland areas or the 100-year floodplain, and critical actions within the 500-year floodplain was published in Galveston County on October 19, 2008.

In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*(NEPA) and FEMA NEPA implementing regulations, a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to assess the potential impacts of the proposed action on the human and natural environment. The Draft EA summarizes the purpose and need, alternatives, affected environment, and potential environmental consequences for the proposed action. The Draft EA is available for comment and can be viewed and downloaded from FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region6.shtm> or at the UTMB website at <http://www.utmb.edu/>. The Draft EA can also be viewed at the Galveston City Hall, Dickinson Public Library, La Marque Public Library, Friendswood Public Library, Helen Hall Library, Rosenberg Library, Mae S. Bruce Library, Genevieve Miller Hitchcock Public Library, and the Moore Memorial Public Library.

In conjunction with the published public notice, a public meeting will be conducted at Levin Hall located on the UTMB Campus, South Auditorium, Room 2.222 located at 1006 Market Street, Galveston, Texas, 77550 on February 6, 2013, between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Free parking will be available at Parking Garage 4, located at 10th and Market Street, Galveston, Texas. The purpose of the public meeting is to discuss the proposed UTMB District Heating and Cooling Project and to address any questions the public may have regarding the project or the Draft EA. Substantive comments collected during the meeting will be addressed as appropriate in the final EA.

The comment period will end 10 days from the initial notice publication date of February 4, 2013. Written comments on the Draft EA can be mailed or faxed to the contact below.

If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA will become final and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued for the project. Substantive comments will be addressed as appropriate in the final documents.

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region VI

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