

U.S. Gives Grants to 4 Gulf Coast States to Upgrade Disaster Housing

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 22 — [FEMA](#) trailers, the cramped, impersonal housing units that have come to define the federal response to major disasters, may be on the way out, thanks to \$388 million in federal grants, announced Friday, that will test half a dozen cozier, more permanent models of postdisaster housing.

The program will offer new housing from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to thousands of families, among the 100,000 still living in trailers across the Gulf Coast, by placing them over the coming year in these studier, roomier, better ventilated homes, many of which have front porches, large windows and even small attics.

Mississippi came out on top in the contest for the grants, receiving \$280.8 million, compared with \$74.5 million for Louisiana, \$16.5 million for Texas and \$15.7 million for Alabama.

Officials in Louisiana were furious, saying their state, which suffered the greatest losses in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year, had been shortchanged.

“FEMA has clearly learned very little from its mistakes, let alone basic math or a sense of fundamental fairness,” Senator [Mary L. Landrieu](#), Democrat of Louisiana, said in a statement.

But officials of the agency said Mississippi’s big share simply reflected the creativity of its plans, as the financing was awarded competitively, based on how quickly the new models could be set up, how comfortable and safe they would be and how much they would cost, among other factors.

The grants come from an appropriation in which Congress directed FEMA to take an alternative approach to the customary trailers. The biggest single grant will finance the construction of units in Mississippi that look like A-

roofed cottages, featuring a compact front porch, windows on three sides, more storage space and better ventilation. Like the existing trailers, they will be set up on wheels, so they can be driven into a disaster zone.

Louisiana officials, meanwhile, intend to use their grant to build what they are calling Katrina Cottages — compact single-family homes made of prefabricated panels, with a porch and up to three bedrooms — in heavily hit areas of New Orleans like Jackson Barracks.

The one model planned in Texas is based on a design that is already used by some 90,000 troops in Iraq. A small house made of prefabricated parts that can be moved by flatbed truck, it can be set up in eight hours by six people. It offers more living space than the trailers and is capable of being elevated so that it can be lifted out of the flood plain.

“It is not going to make the front of Architectural Digest,” said Gil H. Jamieson, a deputy director of FEMA, “but it is aesthetically pleasing.”

In some cases, these homes can be built on regular foundations, making them permanent or at least semipermanent housing, unlike the travel trailers, which are not considered sturdy enough to survive winds that could be produced by a tropical storm.

Federal officials said they could not yet predict how many new homes would be built with the available grant money or how many of the 101,000 families still in FEMA travel trailers or mobile homes across the Gulf Coast would be able to move into these new units.

The government will evaluate each of the six types of new homes to be built, to see whether they should be adopted permanently.

Mr. Jamieson said it was unlikely that FEMA would be able to replace the travel trailers completely. But it hopes that by the next major disaster, it will have cut the numbers significantly.
