

Network Responds to Katrina

From the Network Director



Robert Lynch, M.D.
Network Director

The recent events with Hurricane Katrina have disrupted the lives of thousands. While VA employees across the country have been affected, none have been more severely affected and on such a personal level, as those employees in New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

I want to assure each of you that we are doing everything that we can to address your personal concerns. I want everyone to understand the following—

- As a member of the VA family, you will continue to be paid, and be employed through out this crisis.
- For those who have been displaced, you will continue in a paid administrative status until such time as you can be employed within your home VA site, or some other site.
- I am authorizing all sites and senior management to make all resources available for personal use so that each employee can find out about family, home and loved ones. This includes liberal use of the internet, phones and other communication devices.
- A toll free number has been established for you to call if you have employment questions at 1-888-766-2474. This is open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. CDT.
- A Web site has been set up so that all employees can access timely information. Click on Hurricane Katrina Information on the VISN 16 website, www.visn16.med.va.gov.
- Employee assistance teams and counseling teams are being set up at all sites to help our employees recover.
- A news letter will be published and sent to all sites with up to date and timely information.
- The VISN office in Jackson is the command center for the coordination of all employees and logistics. All assignments/re-assignments should be coordinated with the VISN. All pay issues for NOLA will be handled from VISN.
- The senior leadership for New Orleans is being relocated to the VISN effective September 3, 2005.

I understand that this is a very difficult time for each and every one of you. We are doing everything possible to rush aid and assistance to all sites as fast as the supply chain will allow.

In addition to providing high quality care for all affected veterans, rest assured that the health and welfare of our VA staff is a top priority and we are doing everything possible to take care of our VA family.

Veterans evacuate New Orleans



About 650 patients, staff, and family members were evacuated from the New Orleans VA Medical Center on Thursday and Friday. Air Force C-130 aircrafts transported evacuees to VA facilities in Houston, Alexandria, Shreveport, Jackson, and Little Rock. Pictured above—Employees from the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson begin receiving evacuees at the Mississippi Air National Guard 172nd Air Lift Wing.

Toll free number for veterans

Veterans who receive care from the New Orleans VA or VA Gulf Coast (Biloxi or Gulfport campuses) may call 1-800-507-4571 with questions about their health care.

About the Hurricane Katrina Bulletin

The Hurricane Katrina Bulletin is a publication produced by the South Central VA Health Care Network in an effort to supply updated information to those affected by Hurricane Katrina as we continue to recover from this devastating storm.

The Bulletin will be published on a recurring basis. For more information about the publication or to provide story ideas or information, call April Smith, writer/editor, VISN 16, at 601-364-7902.

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