



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

News Release

Governor Bill Richardson Orders New Mexico HSD To Coordinate New Mexico's Hurricane Relief Resources, State Expands Efforts to Assist Victims

Governor Directs Cabinet Secretaries and Agency Directors to immediately assess all aid opportunities and capabilities

Toll-free New Mexico Hurricane Relief Hotline: 1-866-638-6819

Email: disasterrelief@state.nm.us

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SANTA FE-Governor Bill Richardson today announced he has directed the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) to coordinate and compile all available resources and offers of help for the people and communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

“There has been a tremendous outpouring of support from concerned New Mexicans anxious to donate more than money to help relieve the suffering of the people of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast,” said Governor Richardson. “Now there is one place to go to offer that assistance.”

HSD will work with the New Mexico Office of Homeland Security, the state Office of Emergency Management, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), and state governments in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to match the resources with the needs in specific locations.

People wishing to donate goods or services can call the toll-free HSD NM Disaster Relief Hotline at 1-866-638-6819, or email disasterrelief@state.nm.us. People who want to donate cash should still call the American Red Cross at 1-800-435-7669 (English) or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish).

In addition, the Governor has directed all state agencies to determine how each may be able to assist the relief efforts and report back to him at a special Cabinet meeting scheduled for next Friday, September 9.

“I want to know exactly what we can do, whether it’s temporary housing, jobs, medical services, construction resources, or other assistance, and then we’ll make sure the victims and the affected communities have immediate access to that assistance,” added Governor Richardson.

At the Governor’s direction, New Mexico was one of the first states to offer and activate National Guard troops to assist in the urgent rescue, recovery, and security effort in the hurricane zone.

“We have provided all of the aid and assistance that has been requested so far, and more,” said Governor Richardson, noting that the state and federal authorities managing relief efforts on-site have told states not to send help until asked. “We are in constant contact with officials in the affected areas. They’re assessing the needs, and when they call we’ll be ready to act immediately, whether it’s to take provide beds for medical patients or housing for evacuees. New Mexico is already participating in the search, rescue, and relief efforts, and we’ll be there to help for the long-term recovery as well.”

Here is a summary of what New Mexico is doing to assist:

- 291 National Guard infantry troops called Task Force 515 are departing today from Biggs Field in El Paso on C-130s for deployment to New Orleans. An additional 80 personnel from the 720th Transportation Company will leave today from Las Cruces by ground transportation to support Task Force 515. The designated mission of Task Force 515 will be focused on security and force protection.
- The Department of Health has established a registry of health professionals willing to volunteer to assist with the hurricane relief efforts. In only one day, 200 New Mexicans, including emergency medical technicians, doctors and nurses, signed up to assist patients in the states affected by the hurricane or help with patients who may be evacuated to New Mexico. In addition, the department is gathering supplies of Hepatitis A and Tetanus vaccinations to ensure that state employees will be immunized before they are deployed. To aid families who have evacuated to New Mexico, the department has set up a 30-day waiver of usual immunization requirements for school children so their children can register for school here.
- CYFD offices around the state are accepting donations of diapers and non-perishable forms of baby formula and baby food. These items are critical for the youngest victims of Hurricane Katrina who desperately need them now, and will need them for weeks to come. People can drop off donations at any CYFD office across the state. To find the office nearest you, please call 1-800-610-7610.
- Governor Bill Richardson and Higher Education Secretary Beverlee McClure announced today that they are working with New Mexico colleges and universities to provide special consideration for victims of Hurricane Katrina who want to continue their higher education. The Governor and Secretary McClure have contacted university presidents, the Council of University Presidents and the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges, to encourage and coordinate efforts to offer special assistance, such as waivers of registration fees or delays of tuition payments, for students who want to transfer to New Mexico universities or take classes through distance education.

- The Public Education Department is preparing for the arrival of children from the Gulf Coast who are taking refuge with families in New Mexico. Education Secretary Veronica Garcia today issued a memo to all school district superintendents instructing them to streamline the registration process and make it as easy as possible for students to enroll in New Mexico public schools. The Department is also organizing a clothing and school supply drive to assist the students.
- The Governor authorized the deployment of the New Mexico Task Force 1 that was called up for service this week by FEMA. The Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team departed Monday night and is now in Baton Rouge, Louisiana working with other teams on highly specialized and skilled search and rescue missions. The 70 member team is composed of New Mexico volunteers who are trained in emergency medicine, K-9 searches, collapsed building searches, fire and rescue and other specialized urban rescue support efforts. They are volunteers from fire departments, police departments, wilderness search and rescue teams and other concerned citizens. NMTF1 is administered by the Department of Public Safety Office of Emergency Management.
- The Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) was deployed on Sunday and has been providing medical treatment to patients at the Superdome in New Orleans. DMAT is a 35 member team of volunteer medical professionals, doctors, nurses and others, who help local hospitals and medical personnel in the affected disaster areas.

“Millions of Americans have suddenly found themselves homeless and jobless. Hundreds of thousands of people in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida are without food, water and electricity. Most have lost their homes and their jobs. It could literally be months before basic services are restored. The desperation on the faces of the victims has deeply touched us all,” Governor Richardson said. “I ask all New Mexicans to pray for the victims and for our courageous troops who will once again serve with distinction in harm’s way,” Governor Richardson said.

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