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For Immediate Release

New Mexico Helps Hurricane Victims Get Back on Their Feet

Albuquerque, September 6, 2005 – Following Governor Bill Richardson’s Declaration of Emergency and charging the Human Services Department (HSD) to coordinate help for the Hurricane Katrina evacuees in New Mexico, several state and city of Albuquerque agencies today began helping the 93 evacuees which arrived Sunday from New Orleans, LA, apply and receive social services in an effort to help get them back on their feet.

Today the evacuees were able to sign up for housing, post office box numbers, unemployment assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), social security assistance and identification cards. The City of Albuquerque along with the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD), Department of Labor (DOL), Motor Vehicle Division and the Social Security Administration (SSA) worked together to sign up the evacuees for the assistance they need.

“State and city caseworkers are determining what services are needed and in many instances the evacuees are able to receive services immediately,” said Liz Stefanics, HSD Deputy Secretary. “By the time they complete applications most of them will be assigned an Electronics Benefit Card (EBT) and be able to shop for food at local grocery stores within 24 hours.”

DOL is also assisting evacuees who are looking for work. “Some of these folks may be calling New Mexico home for a while and are anxious to start working,” said DOL Secretary Conroy Chino. “We’ve been able to connect them with jobs that are available, and many of those have come in through the emergency disaster hotline.

The processing center at the Albuquerque Convention Center will remain set up for future evacuees that may be arriving in Albuquerque.

The State Disaster Relief Hotline remains active, 1-866-638-6819. Here New Mexicans are offering monetary and clothing donations, as well as homes and jobs for the displaced hurricane victims. People can also e-mail the hotline at disasterrelief@state.nm.us.

“I encourage everyone to do what they can to help these people in their time of need,” said Governor Bill Richardson.

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