

NEWS

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Board takes additional steps to help hurricane victims

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today took additional significant steps to provide assistance to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"Our county has many resources at its disposal," Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Postmus said. "It's our responsibility - not only as public officials but as human beings - to explore every avenue to make this assistance available to those who need it."

The board today unanimously declared a local emergency, which will make it easier for the county to provide personnel, supplies, and equipment to the relief and recovery efforts, and for the county to receive federal reimbursement for those efforts.

The board also unanimously passed resolutions allowing county employees to receive their regular county salaries and benefits while serving as Red Cross volunteers serving victims of Hurricane Katrina for limited periods of time.

"When we faced our own disaster two years ago with the fires, there was an outpouring of support from throughout the country. This is an opportunity for us to reciprocate and help our fellow Americans in their time of need," Chairman Postmus said.

The board's actions were taken during a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors, at which County Administrative Officer Mark Uffer gave a report on the county's relief efforts to date.

"I decided to call this meeting because I felt that the board, not just the chairman, needs an opportunity to provide direction and to let our employees know that we will be behind them in supporting their relief efforts," Chairman Postmus said.

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The County of San Bernardino has taken several steps to provide assistance to victims of the hurricane. The county established a special Red Cross fund-raising account – which can be accessed through the county's website at www.sbcounty.gov. The county has also sent medical and firefighting staff into the disaster area, and made arrangement to assist any evacuees who arrive in the county.

The county's Arrowhead Regional Medical Center today announced plans to send a team of eight physicians and two radiology technicians, in addition to ARMC Medical Director, Dr. Appannagari Gnanadev, and administrator Jorge Valencia to help staff a medical center established at a sports arena adjacent to the Houston Astrodome. The team will depart on Sunday and serve through September 17.

The relief effort stemmed from contact Arrowhead Regional had made with the Harris County, Texas, hospital district to offer assistance.

Also, the county has been contacted by some businesses interested in hiring evacuees who arrive in San Bernardino County. The county's Economic and Employment Development Department urges any businesses interested in helping in this way to call 1-800-451-JOBS.

Meanwhile, the County Fire Department today announced that its "Fill the Boot" fund-raising drive at the California Speedway this past weekend raised more than \$71,000 in cash toward the hurricane relief effort.

Also, the county announced plans to launch a special relief effort to aid the city of Gulfport, Miss., following a plea made to the county by the city's mayor. The details of this effort will be announced in the days to come.