



Abstract of Presentation by Stan Blazyk and Jim Hale, Co-Chairs

The Mayor's Citizen Response Team for Special Needs Evacuees

Readiness for Recovery: Galveston Evacuation Model

January 18, 2007

To develop the Mayor's Citizen Response Team to identify the special needs evacuees and volunteers a process must be established:

With your city's commitment and support to developing the Citizen Response Team (CRT), begin to identify a core group of volunteers to help expand the volunteer base.

Develop initial protocols and forms including volunteer registration forms, evacuee registration forms and a telephone script for volunteers when contacting potential evacuees.

Publicize the citizen response team initiative for special needs evacuees. Set up a designated telephone number and reception at City Hall for citizens who need evacuation assistance.

CRT volunteers should take responsibility for contacting enrolled evacuees to update the qualification of needs, and register new evacuees in preparation for a future evacuation.

Following a mandatory evacuation order, volunteers should contact the residents that requested transportation to the shelter to obtain more specific information about the size of the household, number and the ages of the children, number and type of pets, and advice as to what to bring with them.

Pre-arrange transportation for residents with very special needs that could not be transported on a regular City bus or school bus.

Organize the evacuee data efficiently for use by the transit department of the City.

Deliver special needs data to the City so that transportation or buses can be assigned by City sections.

After the evacuee data is collected send volunteers home to prepare for the evacuation themselves.

Buses should bring evacuees to the City staging area or collection center.

Use School buses and volunteer bus drivers for backup transportation.

Expect that the number of potential special needs evacuees may be much larger than estimated by your emergency management personnel. There may be more people at the houses where you go to pick up people than are anticipated.

Expect that extended families may want to stay together.

Remind evacuees to bring needed medications, medical equipment, bedding or clothing.

Anticipate that evacuees will not leave without their pets.

Anticipate that evacuees with mental health problems or other behavioral disorders may prove disruptive and difficult to manage during the chaos of an evacuation.

Anticipate that some residential care facilities may not have proper plans for evacuation and may suddenly request to use the city's transportation means.

Anticipate that volunteer availability may be an issue. You may lose some volunteers that you're counting on they're being told to leave as early as possible. Expect that it may be more difficult to enroll potential evacuees after a quiet year or after a difficult evacuation experience.

Volunteers need to be trained and certified. Conduct background checks on volunteers. Plan on continual communication with your volunteers.

Protect the rights of evacuees, particularly those with medical issues. Understand that Medical information is confidential.

Organize a sound database to track the special needs evacuees and volunteers.

Expect to improvise. No matter how good your plans are, you're going to run into some issues that you simply can't anticipate. Communication and ability flexibility are important when developing and implementing a plan.