HOW TO HELP DISASTER SURVIVORS IN TEXAS

Release Date: August 29, 2017

WASHINGTON – The compassion and generosity of the American people is never more evident than during and after a disaster. It is individuals, non-profits, faith- and community-based organizations, private sector partners, and governmental agencies working together that will most effectively and efficiently help survivors cope with the impacts of Tropical Storm Harvey.

Please follow a few important guidelines below to ensure your support can be the most helpful for Tropical Storm Harvey disaster survivors.

TO DONATE TO RELIEF EFFORTS

The most effective way to support disaster survivors in their recovery is to donate money and time to trusted, reputable, voluntary or charitable organizations.

Cash donations offer voluntary agencies and faith-based organizations the most flexibility to address urgently developing needs. With cash in hand, these organizations can obtain needed resources nearer to the disaster location. This inflow of cash also pumps money back into the local economy and helps local businesses recover faster.

Please do not donate unsolicited goods such as used clothing, miscellaneous household items, medicine, or perishable foodstuffs at this time. When used personal items are donated, the helping agencies must redirect their staff away from providing direct services to survivors in order to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.

Donate through a trusted organization. At the national level, many voluntary-, faith- and community-based organizations are active in disasters, and are trusted ways to donate to disaster survivors. Individuals, corporations, and volunteers, can learn more about how to help on the National Voluntary Organizations Active

in Disaster (NVOAD) website.

In addition to the national members, The Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (Texas VOAD) has a list of vetted disaster relief organizations providing services to survivors. Texas VOAD represents more than three dozen faith-based, community, nonprofit and non-governmental organizations.

TO PERSONALLY VOLUNTEER IN THE DISASTER AREAS

The State of Texas is asking volunteers to not self-deploy, as unexpectedly showing up to any of the communities that have been impacted by Hurricane Harvey will create an additional burden for first responders.

The National VOAD has also noted the situation may not be conducive to volunteers entering the impacted zone and individuals may find themselves turned away by law enforcement.

To ensure volunteer safety, as well as the safety of disaster survivors, volunteers should only go into affected areas with a specific volunteer assignment, proper safety gear, and valid identification.

At this time, potential volunteers are asked to register with a voluntary or charitable organization of their choice, many of which are already in Texas and supporting survivors on the ground.

The National and Texas VOAD websites are offering links to those who wish to register to volunteer with community- and faith-based organizations working in the field.

Most importantly, please be patient. Although the need is great, and desire to help strong, it is important to avoid donating material goods or self-deploying to help until communities are safe and public officials and disaster relief organizations have had an opportunity to assess the damage and identify what the specific unmet needs are.

Volunteer generosity helps impacted communities heal from the tragic consequences of disasters, but recovery lasts much longer than today. There will be volunteer needs for many months, and years, after the disaster, so sign up now.

Tropical Storm Harvey is still dangerous, with the potential to impact additional areas of Texas and Louisiana. As the situation changes, needs may also change in these areas. Continue monitoring traditional and social media channels to learn more.

###

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards.

Follow FEMA online at www.fema.gov/blog, www.twitter.com/fema, www.twitter.com/femaspox, www.facebook.com/fema and www.youtube.com/fema. Also, follow Administrator Brock Long's activities at www.twitter.com/fema_brock.

The social media links provided are for reference only. FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.