

Hurricane Rita Assistance Information

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Hurricane Rita is projected to impact the Texas Gulf Coast beginning Thursday, September 22, 2005. Voluntary evacuation of residents and visitors along the upper Texas coast is being encouraged by local and state officials. Texas Tourism encourages all visitors to Texas and, especially the Texas Gulf Coast, to monitor this storm closely and adjust travel plans accordingly.

Texas emergency management officials are monitoring Hurricane Rita and are taking necessary steps to protect residents and visitors in Texas. Texans and visitors are encouraged to follow instructions issued by local and state government officials on preparing for the effects of Hurricane Rita.

Important Links

The following links provide up-to-date information on emergency management planning, evacuation routes, and the status of Hurricane Rita.

Texas Prepares For Rita:

http://www.governor.state.tx.us/priorities/health_safety/hurricane/rita_prepare

Texas Governor's Division of Emergency Management - Situation Reports

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/sitrepindex.htm>

Texas Coastal Evacuation Routes:

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/hurricane.htm>

Texas Road Conditions - Texas Department of Transportation

<http://www.dot.state.tx.us>

National Weather Service:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - NOAA:

<http://www.noaa.com/>

Texas Telephone Numbers for Hurricane Evacuees

These numbers will provide information on public shelters and assistance for hurricane evacuees. Information for persons with special needs seeking public shelter including the

elderly, the ill and the disabled are also available. "Special needs" has currently been defined as persons requiring hospitalization, mental health intervention, home health services and shelter to prevent homelessness.

If a person in Texas is currently in need of assistance, call 2-1-1 or the American Red Cross at 1-866-438-4636 for the location of the nearest shelter.

If you are calling from outside of Texas, the official Hurricane Evacuation number is 1-888-312-4567.

If a person is experiencing a life-threatening situation, call 9-1-1.

If you are calling to report price gouging, please contact the Attorney General's office by calling 1-800-252-8011.

[Emergency Management Contacts by County](#) [195KB MSWord]

Additional Information and Assistance

The following information is geared toward the long-term concerns of evacuees, especially Hurricane Katrina evacuees currently in Texas.

FEMA: 1-800-621-3362 or 1-800-621-FEMA

American Red Cross: 1-866-438-4636 or 1-866-GET-INFO

Information for Editors and News Directors: Hurricane evacuees are staying in areas throughout the state of Texas-sometimes hundreds of miles away from the area directly struck by a storm. Help them by broadcasting information about these phone numbers. These numbers are not for general information. These numbers are not for media calls. These numbers are specifically for evacuees.

Food Stamps

All individuals who are displaced by Hurricane Katrina and are appearing in HHSC field offices are being treated as applicants for expedited food stamp benefits, regardless of previous receipt of benefits in another state and other eligibility factors.

Specifically:

Take client statement for income and other eligibility factors.

Disregard resources.

If the applicant has income but it is not accessible to him/her, use judgment to provide the applicant access to benefits. If some or all of the household's income is not available to the applicant, document the client's statement and certify the case based on the income that is available.

All cases should be certified for August and September only even if the household is receiving benefits in another state. For applications with file date of September 1 or after, certify for September only. HHSC may revisit this in the coming days as the extent of the damage becomes more evident.

We are working with retailers to ensure that displaced individuals who have an EBT card from an affected state can access and use those benefits in Texas at larger retailers such as HEB, Kroger, and Wal-Mart. Louisiana has applied for a disaster declaration that will allow them, among other things, to load all recipients' benefits onto their EBT card on September 1 (as opposed to a staggered issuance) and to issue a supplemental payment to compensate for damaged food. This will benefit displaced food stamp recipients who have their EBT card.

Medicaid and TANF

HHSC is working with our federal partners to resolve issues regarding eligibility for Medicaid and TANF as quickly as possible. Until we receive further guidance, for Medicaid and TANF benefits:

Refer those in need of immediate medical care to local public facilities.

Take the applicant's self-declaration and any available information.

We will complete processing on these cases as soon as final guidelines have been confirmed.

Extended HHSC Field Office Hours

These offices continue to refer clients to the Red Cross, food banks, shelters, and other resources that can help meet their needs. Field staff have been provided a directory of

shelters accepting refugees and will update the list as shelters continue to open across the state.

Offices in affected areas will have extended hours as long as needed. SAVERR and TIERS will remain up until 9 p.m. CDT to accommodate increased traffic. HHSC has requested volunteers from other regions to help in Regions 3 (Dallas County area) and 6 (Harris County area). HHSC has authorized staff overtime and travel to assist these regions.

Other Assistance

The Emergency Services Program is working to provide water and ice to sites housing refugees, and local staff are contacting retailers to request donations of food, ice, and water for staff and clients in local HHSC offices.

Texas pharmacies have been provided instructions from HHSC regarding filling prescriptions for Louisiana Medicaid participants. Those pharmacies will need to fax in enrollment forms posted at <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/HCF/vdp/vdpstart.html>. Pharmacies needing to verify eligibility can do so by calling 1-800-473-2783.

The laws and rules governing the practice of pharmacy in Texas, allow pharmacists to provide emergency refills when the prescriber cannot be reached. Specifically, in an emergency, a pharmacist may use his/her professional judgment in refilling a prescription drug order for a drug (other than a Schedule II controlled substance) provided failure to refill the prescription might result in an interruption of a therapeutic regimen or create patient suffering. Emergency Refill information may be found at the following site: <http://www.tsbp.state.tx.us/hurricaneinfo.htm>

Healthcare providers can verify Medicaid and CHIP enrollment information and procedures to process claims at **1-800-473-2783**.

The 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network, a statewide telecommunications network is providing 24/7 evacuation, shelters and general information during the disaster. Due to the uncertainty of cell phone access from providers outside of Texas, the 2-1-1 Texas system also implemented a toll-free number. The official Hurricane Evacuation number is 1-888-312-4567.

TxDOT will be providing Medical Transportation services, including Medical appointments and Dialysis appointments. The person in need should call the 1-877-633-8747 number for services.

Hurricane Rita Disaster Aid Claims Can Be Filed Online

Those who worked in Chambers, Galveston, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange and Tyler counties and were affected by Hurricane Rita can file an Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim online at www.texasworkforce.org. To file for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), applicants must first file for Unemployment Insurance (UI).

Workers calling the TWC Tele-Center network can do so at one of the numbers listed below during extended hours Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., or **this Saturday, October 1, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, October 2, from 1 to 5 p.m.** to speak with a representative or file a claim.

Austin local:	(512) 340-4300
Dallas local:	(214) 252-1200
El Paso local:	(915) 832-6400
Fort Worth local:	(817) 420-1600
Houston local	(281) 983-1100
McAllen local	(956) 984-4700
San Antonio local:	(210) 258-6600
Others in Texas call toll free:	(800) 939-6631

To be eligible for help under Presidential Disaster Declaration, you must:

- Have worked or been scheduled to work in the disaster area, but because of the disaster no longer have a job, a place to work in the area, or you could not get to your place of work because of disaster damage;
- Have been prevented from working by an injury or illness as a direct result of the disaster; or
- Have become the head of the household and need employment because the head of the household died as a result of the disaster.

Workers have until November 30, 2005, to apply for DUA under Presidential Disaster Declaration.

Also, self-employed business owners are often not aware of potential benefits to which they may be entitled. If you are self-employed, but have lost all or part of your livelihood as a result of this disaster, you may also be eligible for benefits. For information, please call one of the toll-free numbers listed above.