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Hurricane Katrina Relief: How You Can Help

Donate and volunteer to help Katrina survivors nationally and here in Colorado.

How to Help



SEPTEMBER 08, 2005 -- As the tragedy of human suffering and environmental devastation unfolded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, millions of people throughout the nation and the world were stunned, shocked, and overwhelmed by a profound sense of

helplessness.

Not sure where to start? The Mile High United Way offers a single point of contact to find information on how to get involved.

Call 2-1-1 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. If you are not in the Denver metro area, call 866-760-6489.

Local, national and worldwide disaster relief efforts are now underway in the Gulf Coast region. More than one million residents in these states are being evacuated, and these families will need long-term assistance until they can rebuild and redefine their lives.

Cities throughout the nation are responding with offers to house and support Katrina survivors, including the State of Colorado. Officials are expecting as many as 1,000 people from the Gulf Coast to take shelter in Colorado as part of Operation Safe Haven at Lowry Air Force Base.

Denver citizens, employees, businesses and charities have asked what the city is doing, and how they can get involved and help. Below you'll find information about the metro area's efforts to welcome these new members of our community, and how each of us can make a difference by donating or volunteering.

For Katrina Victims

CNN/Money offers a list of financial resources to re-build five key areas of your life: money, housing, health, employment and kids. Read:

- [What every Katrina victim should know](#)

Metro Area Response

The Colorado Division of Emergency Management and the Colorado National Guard are working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to accommodate requests for assistance with housing, personnel and equipment.

Denver's Office of Emergency Management and similar entities within other Colorado cities are lending their support to this effort.

Related Links

Denver International Airport is providing assistance to evacuees arriving at the airport, and loaning various transportation equipment. Members of the Denver Sheriff, Police, and Fire Departments are working with the City of Aurora and others to provide security, identification, and organizational assistance at Lowry. At this time, more than 460 evacuees have arrived and are living in temporary housing in the campus dormitories.

- [Denver's Emergency Preparedness Resources](#) The Denver Department of Human Services is helping evacuees obtain Social Security and other benefits, locate relatives, obtain child care and foster homes, and crisis counseling. Denver Health is working with the American Red Cross and others to provide medical screening, medications and supplies. Denver and Aurora Public Schools are working together to enroll K-12 students.
- [A-to-Z Directory](#)

Several metro area colleges and universities are placing students from the Gulf Coast, and adjusting tuition and fees to expedite enrollment. Colorado State University has accepted approximately 18 students, and the University of Colorado campuses have admitted 160. Additionally, the University of Denver is enrolling 50 students, mostly from New Orleans' Tulane University, which is a private school similar to DU in size and stature.

- [New to Denver?](#)
- [Mayor's Office](#)
- [City Council Contact List](#)

Family Assistance Center for Evacuees

- [Denver Public Schools](#)
- [Colorado Colleges and Universities](#)

The American Red Cross Mile High Chapter has established a Family Assistance Center to assist evacuees. The center, open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., is located at the Arapahoe Centerpoint Plaza, 14980 E. Alameda Drive, Aurora, CO, just east of I-225. (Note: The center has moved from its temporary location on First Avenue.)

- [Denver Health Medical Center](#)
- [Bonfils Blood Center](#)

Evacuees can receive counseling from a Red Cross caseworker, access Internet-enabled computers, and obtain assistance from several state and federal agencies including the Department of Human Services, the Department of Motor Vehicles, Housing Authority, Child Care, Food Assistance, Public Assistance, Veterans Administration, Social Security, Workforce Development, and FEMA.

- [State of Colorado](#)
- [Metro Volunteers](#)

The [Regional Transportation District](#) is providing free shuttle transportation for evacuees at Lowry to the center. Shuttles run in two-hour intervals at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. daily.

Donate and Volunteer

- [Denver Dumb Friends League](#)
- [Denver Municipal Animal Shelter](#)
- [Petfinder.com](#)
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

While needs may change over time as the scope of devastation is evaluated, the federal government and disaster relief organizations are reminding the public that the most important thing they need now is money. This relieves aid workers from having to sort, transport, and distribute goods, and it ensures that people receive assistance more quickly.

Local organizations, including the Mile High Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, are currently meeting all of the immediate needs of the arriving evacuees. The community is organizing now to meet their long-term needs and donations of time and money will be crucial in those efforts.

- [FirstGov](#)
- **American Red Cross:** Donate to the National Disaster Relief Fund for Hurricane Katrina by calling 1-800-HELP-NOW (1-800-257-7575 Spanish), or by visiting www.redcross.org.

- **Mile High Chapter of the American Red Cross:** This local chapter is helping coordinate aid for evacuees here in Colorado. Visit www.denver-redcross.org to find local aid efforts and resources for evacuees.
- **Salvation Army:** Call 1-800-SAL-ARMY or visit katrina.salvationarmy.org
- **Mile High United Way:** This agency is helping coordinate local organizations that are assisting hurricane victims here in Colorado. Call 2-1-1 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, or visit www.unitedwaydenver.org. If you are not in the Denver metro area, call 866-760-6489.
- **Metro Volunteers:** This agency is collecting the contact information for individuals who want to volunteer, and they are matching up volunteers with available opportunities. If interested, call 303-282-1234 or visit www.metrovolunteers.org.

The Salvation Army is feeding evacuees at Lowry. To volunteer, call 303-866-9280. The Mile High chapter of the American Red Cross is seeking volunteers to staff their call center. They are in particular need of Spanish-speaking call-takers and individuals who can volunteer during normal working hours. If interested, call 303-607-4750.

Donations are being accepted at the Comitis Crisis Center. Please sort and label your clothes, bedding, baby items and toiletries. Professional clothes for men and women are needed as they may need to go on job interviews. And, new underwear is always needed. They are not taking furniture. For more information, call 303-341-9160. Items can be dropped off from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the center, located at 9840 E. 17th Avenue in Aurora.

Many Colorado charities may suffer a loss with all the attention focused on disaster relief on the Gulf Coast. Winter is just around the corner, which brings higher heating costs and needs by many Coloradans for warm clothing, coats, food and shelter. Consider making an extra donation so that all of our residents can be assisted in the coming months.

Blood Donations

The Bonfils Blood Center is seeking blood donations to help hurricane victims and patients within our community. For information about scheduling a blood donation, call 303-363-2300, or visit www.bonfils.org.

Animal Welfare

Several Colorado animal welfare organizations are assisting with rescue and shelter efforts for the animal companions of Katrina survivors. The Colorado Humane Society, the American Humane Association, the Humane Society of the United States, and others have deployed search and rescue teams to the Gulf Coast.

Coloradans who want to help the animal victims of Hurricane Katrina can donate to the Colorado Emergency Relief Fund through the Colorado Veterinary Medical Foundation. This organization is coordinating the Colorado State Animal Response Team (SART) program.

CVMF will direct 100 percent of funds collected to organizations assisting the animal victims -- both those owned by evacuees as well as shelter animals awaiting adoption. Call 303-318-0447, or visit www.cosart.org. Checks made payable to "CVMF - Katrina Fund" can be mailed to 789 Sherman Street, Suite 550; Denver, CO 80203.

Animals arriving in Denver from Operation Safe Haven are being housed temporarily at the Dumb Friends League in Denver after health screenings and identification. Animals will be cared for through SART and collaborating agencies until such time as the owners are placed in suitable housing with their pets or returned to their homes.

For at least the next several weeks, the Dumb Friends League requests that all stray, lost, or unwanted animals be taken to the animal control agency in the community where the animals were found. They have provided a [list of alternative intake organizations](#).

In Denver, this is the Denver Municipal Animal Shelter (DMAS), located at 678 S. Jason Street. Call (303) 698-0076 or visit www.denvergov.org/animalshelter. DMAS is always seeking donations and volunteer assistance for the care and shelter of animals.

Fundraising Events

A variety of local events are taking place over the next several weeks. Denver's media organizations have compiled extensive fundraising lists, volunteer opportunities, information and links for displaced evacuees, and more. Visit:

- [The Denver Post](#)
- [The Rocky Mountain News](#)
- [9News](#)
- [KCNC News 4](#)
- [KMGH 7 News](#)

Beware Hurricane Katrina Scams

While the stories of the families displaced by Hurricane Katrina are heart-wrenching, it is important to make wise donations using your head, not your heart. Always research any organization before giving a donation. Below are Web sites with helpful tips to heed:

- www.irs.gov -- advice, reputable charity lists, and tax information.
- www.give.org -- managed by the Better Business Bureau
- www.guidestar.org -- managed by Philanthropic Research

The Federal Trade Commission reports that it hasn't taken long for criminals to try to exploit Hurricane Katrina. There are already "phishing" e-mails pretending to be solicitations from the Red Cross that have links embedded in them that will take you to a fake Red Cross Web site.

Do not respond to any e-mail soliciting donations from the Red Cross or any other organization. Go directly to the organization's official Web site or call them to make donations.

Federal Resources

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#): Find information on locating missing relatives and friends, volunteer to make a donation, provide information on resources available for recovery efforts by local businesses, contractors and vendors, and more.

[Social Security Administration](#). The Social Security Administration has a list of temporary offices located in the Gulf Coast for Katrina victims. For more information, or to locate a center, call 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

[Department of Health and Human Services](#): Offers a toll-free hotline for people in crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Dial 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to connect to a network of local crisis centers across the country that are committed to crisis counseling. Callers to the hotline will receive counseling from trained staff at the closest certified crisis center in the network.

[Internal Revenue Service](#): The IRS has issued special tax relief for taxpayers residing in the official disaster areas struck by Katrina, including additional time to submit estimated tax payments and a special taxpayer hotline. Call 1-866-562-5227 to learn about available tax relief, get free copies of tax return transcripts, and receive a Disaster Tax Loss Kit.

[FirstGov](#). This government portal provides information and links to all federal agencies involved in disaster relief efforts.

Other National Resources and Programs

The Community Oncology Alliance (COA) and CancerConsultants.com have established a Web site, www.katrinacancerhelp.com, and toll-free call center (1-888-912-9111) to assist thousands of cancer patients and caregivers displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Dozens of cancer programs throughout Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi are closed, and over 150 community-based cancer clinics in the Southeast states have mobilized physicians, nurses and staff to care for cancer patients currently living away from their homes.

The service enables displaced cancer patients to locate medical treatment resources, offers displaced physicians a way to register their temporary contact information, and connects medical professionals with volunteer opportunities.

Compiled by [Betsy Kimak](#), Internet Site Administrator, Customer Information Services. Photo: [NOAA](#) satellite image of Hurricane Katrina taken on August 28, 2005, at 11:45 a.m. EDT when the storm was a Category 5 hurricane.

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