



U.S. COAST GUARD



Homeland Security

Flag Voice 271

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HURRICANE KATRINA AND RITA PEOPLE SUPPORT UPDATE

This is an update to my Flag Voice 267 of 16 September regarding the many initiatives we have undertaken to support our people in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and now Hurricane Rita as well.

- **Housing/Relocation Support:** We have made considerable progress on three significant initiatives that will result in additional benefits for our active duty personnel.

- Per Diem duration increase: The Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee has extended the payment of 100 percent per diem from 30 days to 60 days for those dependents at designated or alternate safe havens. All qualifying active duty dependents at these locations will be entitled to the full evacuation allowances for the first 60 days (vice first 30 days) with 60% of these allowances payable up to an additional 120 days.

- Transportation back to residence: The Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that with respect to active duty dependents ordered to evacuate prior to Hurricane Katrina, returning to their home to retrieve valuables and personal items is a necessary expense incident to that evacuation. Based on this determination, dependents that travel back to their storm damaged properties to retrieve personal effects are authorized mileage reimbursement.

- Waiver of BAH Forfeiture for use of government quarters: Working with DoD, we have gained approval to grant waivers of the 30-day rule whereby members and their families who lived in private housing and are drawing BAH would normally lose BAH if they occupied government quarters for more than 30 days. We will waive the forfeiture of BAH for a period up to 180 days for those members and their families who are temporarily occupying government quarters at a designated or alternate safe haven and still have an obligation to pay for private housing used as a principal residence in the affected areas. This waiver applies to both, members with and without dependents.

- **PCS Assignments:** For those active duty members in the affected areas expecting reassignment in AY06 or having special needs incident to either Katrina or Rita, the Personnel Command has formed several teams as mentioned in Flag Voice 267 to visit units and individuals in the affected areas to discuss assignment possibilities and any other related personal matters. Two teams from CGPC-opm and two teams from CGPC-epm were sent to the Gulf Coast Region last week and will complete their visits later this week.

- **Support to our Civilian Employees:** Our deployed civilian personnel specialists in St. Louis continue to support the needs of our civilian workforce

and are ready to publish their 3 edition of our guide to answer specific questions regarding evacuation orders, pay issues, travel concerns, benefits information, retirement information for civilian retirees and other related questions. Where possible, we have provided paper copies of this guide to all civilian personnel in the affected areas. The same information is also published on the following website: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgpc/cpm/home/Hurricane_Katrina.htm. A management guide has also been issued to assist managers and supervisors with their decisions regarding returning employees to work.

- **Special Personnel Support Team:** A joint Headquarters, MLC and Eighth District "Personnel Support Team" of experts lead by RADM Steve Rochon will also visit with units in the affected areas this week to discuss personnel related support issues including housing, BAH entitlements, pay, benefits, assignments, work-life, and legal issues for both military and civilian personnel.

- **Tuition Assistance Temporary Policy Change:** We understand that some people may need to withdraw from classes that were originally approved for Coast Guard Tuition Assistance due to dislocation from their residence, increased duty related to rescue and recovery operations, or unforeseen deployments to the Hurricane affected areas. Applicants must officially withdraw from the class to receive a "W" grade. By officially receiving an involuntary "W" grade rather than an "F" grade, the school will receive payment for the enrollment but the student will not be asked to reimburse the government for that expense. To make the process as easy as possible, commands are not required to submit official letters for students in this situation through 31 December 2005. Individuals in these situation merely need to contact their ESO who will then send an appropriate e-mail to the Institute indicating withdrawal "due to military duty". For members who enrolled at schools in the affected areas that might not have access to withdraw from courses, the Institute has placed a temporary hold on sending letters of indebtedness for incomplete courses with OPFACs in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. If there are any questions, please call LTJG Joe Loven at the Institute. He can be reached at (405) 954-7233.

- **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance and Coast Guard Foundation Support:** CGMA and the Coast Guard Foundation continue their efforts to raise money to support those members of the Coast Guard Family directly affected by either Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. To date, the CGMA has received over \$742,000 in donations to the Katrina Account while the Foundation has received donations of over \$875,000 for that same purpose. Thus far, CGMA has provided over \$1,165,000 in financial assistance to meet the most pressing immediate needs of more than 570 members including Active Duty, Reserve, Retired, Civilian and Auxiliary. These needs have included:
 - Essential subsistence items like food, shelter, clothing, toiletries, medicine . . . Etc.

 - Transportation expenses like gas, dependent relocation costs, emergency car repairs to necessitate travel to safe havens

- Minor home repairs like a few insurance deductibles in emergency situations, generators, emergency roof repairs, tree removal
- Replacement of essential household goods like linens, utensils, beds, temporary needs at a safe haven
- Rent deposits
- Loss of income from spouse to assist with paying current bills

We are now in the process of determining how the donated money to CGMA and the Foundation can be best used to help mitigate some of the more long-term financial hardships to our people in the affected areas. If you haven't already given to either one of these fine organizations whose sole purpose is to help Coast Guard people, please consider doing so. Every dollar will go directly to our people whose needs in the affected areas far exceed our means to assist with every issue.

Regards,

RADM Kenneth T. Venuto
Ken Venuto

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