



Greater New York Hospital Association

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Kenneth E. Raske, President

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**VIA FACSIMILE
TWO PAGES**

TO: Chief Executive Officers ML-155

FROM: Kenneth E. Raske, President

RE: Update on Hurricane Katrina Emergency Relief Efforts

GNYHA has been exploring ways to facilitate its members' offers to help with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. As you are already aware, we have been closely involved in the Federal response plans being coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which include the creation of a temporary medical infrastructure, specifically the establishment of 250-bed medical shelters throughout the affected areas. In a conference call held this morning, GNYHA provided members with details of these efforts.

In a separate development today, 1199 SEIU President Dennis Rivera and I had several discussions with New York State Governor George Pataki's Office to identify ways New York-area hospitals could help with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts within the Federal response system. As a result of these communications, the Governor's Office is exploring a plan under which volunteer medical teams could travel with a 1,000-person unit of the New York National Guard that would be deployed next week, most likely to Mississippi. Whether this plan will be approved by FEMA and the specific details of the plan are not yet known. I emphasize that while traveling with a National Guard unit provides a degree of assurance of safety, the conditions under which these medical teams would be working and living once in the Gulf region may be extremely difficult. Consequently, should this plan move forward, it is critically important that any potential volunteers be able to work and live in harsh conditions, including sweltering temperatures.

GNYHA Conference Call on Federal Relief Efforts

As mentioned above, GNYHA held a conference call with members this morning to provide an update on Hurricane Katrina emergency relief efforts. On the call, we reiterated that GNYHA is actively working with State and Federal agencies to coordinate the resources and expertise of GNYHA members, and that while New York-area hospitals have generously offered to donate everything from money to supplies to teams of medical personnel, GNYHA is working within HHS and FEMA response systems to support existing relief efforts.

We also reiterated that we are waiting for HHS to provide further guidance and specifications regarding how hospitals and other health care providers can contribute to the relief efforts. Other information shared on the call included:

- On an American Hospital Association (AHA) call yesterday, the heads of the Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana hospital associations gave firsthand accounts of the needs of those states. While most patients in Mississippi and Alabama have been successfully moved to various hospitals within those states for treatment, in Louisiana some 3,000 patients in the New Orleans area still need to be evacuated, and a lack of security is the biggest obstacle confronting hospital and rescue workers. Area hospitals are also in dire need of water, power, and food.
- AHA has created a new Web site, www.hospitalreliefforts.org, where hospitals can register what personnel and supplies they can provide for the relief effort. This information will be shared with HHS, which will contact hospitals to deploy the services needed. GNYHA is strongly encouraging members that plan to offer relief services to identify those services on this Web site.

Participants on GNYHA's membership call this morning asked a number of excellent questions regarding the HHS deployment, most of them related to the official status, role, and legal and liability protections that will be accorded to the teams of medical personnel that may be called on to travel to the Gulf region. GNYHA is pursuing answers to these questions and will share them with members shortly.

We again emphasize that we will share all emerging details as soon as we receive them. In the meantime, we urge you to e-mail Susan Waltman (waltman@gnyha.org) as to whether you would like to send a team to staff an HHS emergency medical shelter and/or to travel with the National Guard, should this latter plan be approved.

Thank you for your deep commitment to supporting the emerging needs of Hurricane Katrina victims.

cc (all via e-mail): Emergency Preparedness Coordinating Council
 Disaster Committee Chairs
 Emergency Department Chairs
 Government Affairs Forum
 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
 Prehospital Care Directors
 Public Affairs Committee
 Community Affairs Forum