



Greater New York Hospital Association

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Kenneth E. Raske, President

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VIA FACSIMILE
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TO: Chief Executive Officers

FROM: Kenneth E. Raske, President 

RE: Emergency Relief Services in Gulf Region Following Hurricane Katrina

GNYHA just participated in a conference call with U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt to discuss how hospitals and hospital associations across the country can assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. According to the Secretary, a Section 319 Public Health Emergency has been declared for that area. The Federal Government, led by HHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), will be creating a temporary medical infrastructure to assist both those individuals impacted by the storm, as well as those patients whose course of care has been interrupted by the hurricane's impact on local medical facilities.

Under this system, the Federal Government will be setting up 250-bed medical shelters in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and surrounding states. Ten of these shelters will be staged by Friday, September 2, with an additional 10 shelters staged by early next week. Each of the shelters will be staffed by approximately 100 health care providers, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and mental health care providers. As of today, health care providers from the U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Defense (DOD), and Department of Veterans Affairs are being deployed in an "all hands on deck" approach.

According to Secretary Leavitt, the goal of the "austere but capable" medical shelters is to stabilize patients, provide courses of treatment, and fill prescriptions that may have lapsed during the storm's aftermath. Additionally, patients requiring further care may be transported to medical facilities in surrounding areas, and then, if necessary, nationally utilizing the National Disaster Medical System. HHS has identified approximately 2,000 available beds in the 12-state Gulf area. The Federal Government led by the DOD is working on coordinating transportation services to facilitate evacuation to the shelters.

How GNYHA Members Can Help

The most important thing we learned from the call is that this is going to be an extremely fluid process and much more information will be made available in the next 24 to 48 hours. That said, callers were told that all support efforts—including the donation of money, services, and assistance from personnel with specific areas of expertise like infection control—will be

coordinated through hospital associations. According to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Deputy Administrator Leslie Norwalk, HHS will contact the American Hospital Association (AHA) and other state and regional associations with information about resource requirements. GNYHA will be participating on a call with the AHA tomorrow to obtain further details. In turn, GNYHA will work with AHA to field these requests and match them with available resources in our area. In the meantime, you may want to inventory the availability and interest of hospital staff for participation in relief efforts, should the need arise.

We will keep you apprised of all developments as they occur. If you have questions, please contact Doris Varlese, 212-506-5494 or varlese@gnyha.org, or Leslie Isenegger, 212-506-5423 or isenegger@gnyha.org.

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