



The United States Conference of Mayors

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U.S. MAYORS RESPOND TO HURRICANE GUSTAV: MAYORS REACHING OUT TO MAYORS

St. Paul, Minnesota - United States Conference of Mayors President Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, along with USCM Second Vice-President Burnsville, MN Mayor Elizabeth Kautz and CEO Executive Director Tom Cochran held an emergency conference call today at the GOP Convention in St. Paul with the mayors of the nation for a report from the mayors of the Gulf Coast Region that were directly impacted by Hurricane Gustav. The call featured approximately 100 mayors including New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden, whose cities received the brunt of the storm's impact. Mayor Nagin and Mayor Holden gave an assessment of the storm's damage and explained their specific needs to the nation's mayors. In addition, Mobile (AL) Mayor Sam Jones and Meridian (MS) Mayor John Robert Smith are coordinating relief efforts to many cities and towns in the Gulf Region.

Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden indicated that Baton Rouge was hardest hit and desperately needs the immediate help of the nation's mayors. Specifically, 250,000 homes out of 300,000 are without power. Wind damage is extensive and several trees are down. Most importantly, Baton Rouge is in critical need of diesel fuel for hospitals, the local water supply and the sheriff's department. Because Baton Rouge was not ordered to evacuate, citizens are still in the city and are bearing the brunt of the storm's impact. Holden is particularly concerned about the city's poor and elderly, which have the least amount of resources available to them.

Miami Mayor Diaz, an expert on hurricane preparedness and recovery, advised the nation's mayors to remember that the real work begins after the cameras leave. "The work is not over yet; it is just beginning. Often some of the bigger damage is done to homes and other structures after the storm leaves," warned Diaz.

Baton Rouge Mayor Holden spoke about FEMA's performance saying it was not much better than during Hurricane Katrina. "Only one person from FEMA is here on the ground in Baton Rouge and I am not sure if that person has any authority. In fact, we still have not received tractor trailers and critical emergency supplies," he said.

While New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin did say that FEMA staged critical supplies near New Orleans prior to the storm, he also added, "FEMA is FEMA. I don't have a lot of confidence in them. We are trying to be as self-sufficient as possible." Mayor Nagin told Mayor Holden that he would share left-over supplies with Baton Rouge. "Let's stick together and help each other out," said Mayor Nagin.

Mayor Diaz is contacting the Director of FEMA Dave Paulison in the hopes of improving their outreach to the impacted cities. Tom Cochran, USCM CEO and Executive Director is pleased to report that the U.S. Conference of Mayors is also reaching out to the private sector, specifically, Walgreens, Wal-Mart and Home Depot and other USCM Business Council partners, to assist the mayors of the Gulf Coast as they begin recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Mayor Nagin reported that New Orleans may be in need of hospital personnel and medical supplies. He also said that the sewer system in the city is not operational and he is continuing to assess structural damage. Mayor Nagin is specifically concerned about repopulating the city and expects that residents will be allowed to return by Thursday, September 4, 2008. CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran has been in touch with Doctors Without Borders in Manhattan.

Many mayors in the region offered assistance on the conference call – specifically Mobile (AL) Mayor Sam Jones Atlanta (GA) Mayor Shirley Franklin and Meridian (MS) Mayor John Robert Smith, who is still assessing the damage to the communities in that state.

Mayor Diaz concluded, "What is needed right now is our quick and decisive action to help with the emotional toll because the real work of taking care of our residents comes after everyone leaves. We're all mayors and we are all in this together. Mayors are first responders and our first priority is assisting those impacted by Hurricane Gustav."

Official list of needs provided by Mayor Holden for the City of Baton Rouge:

- FOOD AND WATER
- COTS
- TRAILER TO HAUL & STORE
- PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS
- FIRST AID SUPPLIES
- DRY GOODS
- BLANKETS
- BLOW-UP MATTRESSES
- WASHING SUPPLIES (POWDER)
- PORTABLE GENERATORS
- PORTABLE STORAGE PODS
- TARPS
- PORTABLE RADIOS (AM)
- COMMUNICATION DEVICES
- HAND SANITIZER
- BABY SUPPLIES

MIAMI MAYOR MANNY DIAZ IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS FROM MIAM; AND BURNSVILLE (MN) MAYOR KAUTZ, USCM SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT AND TOM COCHRAN, USCM CEO & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TOM COCHRAN ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS ON THE GROUND IN MINNEAPOLIS-ST.PAUL BY CALLING THE NUMBERS ABOVE.