



DATE: September 7, 2005

TO: Chief Executive Officer
Chief Operating Officer
Vice President, Medical Affairs
Chief Nursing Executive
Emergency Preparedness Contact

FROM: Gary S. Carter, FACHE
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SUBJECT: **Updated Information Regarding Hurricane Katrina**

As we've all come to realize, the response efforts undertaken at the federal and state levels remain fluid. It's "a walk as opposed to a sprint," as someone has appropriately characterized. As a result, NJHA is keeping in close contact with the American Hospital Association as well as New Jersey's Department of Health and Senior Services to gather current information regarding the process by which healthcare providers can volunteer to support victims of Hurricane Katrina. But, to clarify any confusion, the state Department of Health and Senior Services has taken the lead on this coordination effort

In that regard, I've spoken today directly to Commissioner of Health Dr. Fred Jacobs. He was explicit in telling me that **at this point the state has not been asked to dispatch any medical personnel (either as teams or individuals) and will not do so until there is a specific request from federal officials to do same.** Only law enforcement has been requested to stabilize the situation, particularly in New Orleans, and New Jersey is responding with police and the appropriate support.

Commissioner Jacobs underscored that any eventual response of medical personnel or resources must be state directed. For individuals now wanting to register as potential volunteers when the need arises, let me reiterate the key point of my memo of yesterday. Volunteers can register through the state's Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) program.

The MRC is a program designed to help identify and register individuals who are willing to serve. Volunteers are utilized by county and local health agencies as part of an established emergency management system. Individuals with special expertise may be called upon to serve on a "special response team." For specific information regarding the responsibilities of a MRC

volunteer, access www.njmrc.gov. For the purposes of Hurricane Katrina, the MRC is being used as a vehicle to collect information on behalf of DHSS. *It is important to note that if registering through the MRC, you may be called upon to volunteer for other public health emergencies; however, you are not obligated to provide support.* When registering, the potential impact of your absence to your hospital and the conditions under which you will be volunteering must be considered. A checklist is attached for your review if you are still interested in, and committed to, volunteering for Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

If you have immediate questions regarding the various registration options, contact the Department of Health and Senior Service Relief Command Center. They can be reached by phone at 866-234-0964 or via e-mail at njdhsskatrinarelief@doh.state.nj.us.

Please consider the following prior to volunteering:

- ❑ Your hospital must continue to maintain business operations so your absence should not compromise business continuity.
- ❑ Your particular expertise may not be needed at a particular point in time however others may be deployed. There is no way to determine in advance when you may be called upon to provide your services.
- ❑ The location of your deployment will not be known until you are notified that your services are required.
- ❑ There is no compensation (at this time) by HHS for salary and travel nor is there a per diem.
- ❑ The time commitment can be a minimum of 14 days and can be longer if necessary.
- ❑ Conditions in affected areas are austere:
 - 12-hour shifts
 - Possibly no showers, housing in tents, etc.
 - No air conditioning
 - Longer period of standing
 - Sleep accommodations on bedroll
 - Military ready to eat meals
 - Portable toilets
 - No salary, travel or per diem
 - Assignments may last 14 days or longer
 - Required Hepatitis B and Tetanus/Diphtheria immunizations
 - Water may be snake-infested
 - Working conditions may require contact with contaminated water
- ❑ Although you have registered to volunteer, it is unknown if and when deployment may occur.