

September 8, 2005

RE: NENA STATEMENT ON HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER

To our NENA members,

We have all been shocked and saddened at the extent of damage and devastation in our Gulf Coast region in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This weekend we will all pause to remember September 11th, while at the same time watching continuing news reports of broken bodies being pulled from the murky New Orleans floodwater and heart-wrenching stories of survivors displaced all along southern Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana who in many cases have literally lost everything, including friends, neighbors, loved ones and family members. The damage from the storm is extensive even up into parts of Texas, Florida, and Georgia and we're still anxiously watching Ophelia and wondering if she or other storms will strengthen and where and when will they make landfall.

In many ways the events of the past 10 days have been like living a September 11th all over again, except without any enemy to declare war upon beyond ourselves and Mother Nature. This is particularly true for the victims and their families. Within the NENA family our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to those affected. As your President I am humbled as I continue to hear reports from the responses being made by our members and many of our chapter and local leaders.

One of many examples is from our North Carolina Chapter's "Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (T.E.R.T.), which received a formal request through their state Office of Emergency Management within the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to deploy and assist with PSAP staffing in St. Tammany's Parish. This past Monday morning they had a 10 person team on site in Covington, LA. They have since reported that the 9-1-1 lines have been ringing 24x7 and they have been fielding calls for every imaginable request. Some calls are from distraught family members searching for loved ones, others to report backed up sewer problems. Some reports are for new emergencies such as auto accidents, sick or injured persons, looting or law enforcement issues, etc. and others calling for help with continued cleanup efforts or the recovery of deceased persons. This is all continuing while many of the local 9-1-1 personnel have themselves lost their homes and are trying to take care of their own families and find a place for them to live.

Other examples of remarkable response from our chapters and members include TERT-like teams organized or deployed from Illinois, Florida, and Texas (to name just a few). Volunteers continue to come forward across the country, from Maine to Oregon. Our California NENA chapter organized a Katrina relief fund for both the Louisiana NENA and APCO chapters. Our Illinois members have reported that some 20 telecommunicators along with 75 law enforcement officers will be deploying to the Gulf Coast area over the next few days, coordinated through

ILEAS. Many commercial vendors, service providers, and state NENA and APCO chapters have been working together to get involved in the recovery effort, whether to volunteer time, money, equipment or other resources, or to receive displaced families for housing. We know that our dedicated 9-1-1 personnel are extremely tired, yet as I talk with many contacts or read through their emails, almost every one is positive with an understanding that with an outpouring of help and encouragement from their 9-1-1 “family” they know they are going to make it through!

It is important that our response continue in a coordinated manner. The FCC has regularly updated emergency communications information on their website at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/katrina>. If you want to help please be sure to contact and coordinate through your state emergency management agency (EMA) or your local Red Cross office (<http://www.redcross.org/where/chapts.asp>) or Salvation Army (<http://katrina.salvationarmy.org>). You can also get up-to-date information and donate through the 9-1-1 CARES website: <http://911cares.com/katrina.html> or the USA Freedom Corps website <http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov>. If any of your NENA chapters have TERT-like teams or individuals interested and available to help I would ask you to contact Craig Whittington at North Carolina NENA: Craig.Whittington@greensboro-nc.gov. Craig has been helping with our coordination efforts and making regular updates for those involved via the NENA listserv and other means. We had a report just today that the Gulfport/Biloxi area of Mississippi is coordinating a PSAP mutual aid request with the help of NC NENA.

Having a secure and reliable emergency communications infrastructure is absolutely vital for our communities. This weekend in particular I hope we will each pause to consider our own humanity and vulnerability. The impact of Hurricane Katrina will be felt for many years to come. Throughout this ordeal NENA’s primary focus remains to ensure continued E9-1-1 service through restoration of PSAP capabilities, including equipment and staffing. We need to collaborate rather than complain. Now is the time for rebuilding rather than blame-making. Working together I know we will continue to make a difference.

For the National Emergency Number Association



David F. Jones, ENP
NENA President