

## Payroll update for New Orleans VA employees

Payroll deductions will begin in the next pay period (pay date—October 11) for New Orleans VA employees who requested and received salary advances during the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. (A salary advance is money paid in advance to an employee and must be paid back.)

If you have questions concerning your pay, please send an email to [V16KatrinaPayroll@med.va.gov](mailto:V16KatrinaPayroll@med.va.gov) and someone will respond to you as soon as possible. Remember to not send sensitive information via email (i.e. social security numbers). If you do not have access to a computer, you may call Juanita Newton (601) 362-4471 extension 5907.

New Orleans VA employees will receive their Earning and Leave statements for all pay periods but may be delayed a few days.

Remember you may access your Earning and Leave statements online at [www.employeeexpress.gov](http://www.employeeexpress.gov). If you have lost your pin code or need to establish a new one, call 1-478-757-3030.

## Information collection to begin from New Orleans employees

New Orleans VA Medical Center employees are being asked to report how hurricane Katrina has impacted them by completing an Employee Personal Needs Checklist (see form enclosed with newsletter).

Each medical center will designate a coordinator to collect these forms from New Orleans employees. For those who are not yet at a VA medical center, the form will also be provided on the VISN 16 internet, [www.visn16.med.va.gov](http://www.visn16.med.va.gov).

## Employee contact line set up for Hurricane Rita

As Hurricane Rita approaches, VA is advising employees in Rita's projected path to follow the instructions of local safety and law enforcement officials.

If you are evacuated or unable to get to work as a result of the hurricane, please contact VA to let us know you are safe and where you can be reached by calling toll free 1-866-233-0152. Telephone lines open on Wednesday, September 21, 2005 at 3 p.m. Central Time. Operators will then be available from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT (7 days a week). You may call as soon as you have made evacuation plans and have contact information available or within 48 hours of the hurricane.

## Common reactions to a major disaster

*(the following is an excerpt from the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder's website. For more information, visit [www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov))*

Following a disaster, people typically describe a range of emotions including relief to be alive, followed by stress, fear, and anger.

### Common reactions to a disaster

- Feeling hopeless about the future & detached or unconcerned about others
- Trouble concentrating
- Jumpy & startle easily at sudden noise
- On guard and constantly alert
- Having disturbing dreams/memories

*You may also experience more physical reactions such as:*

- Stomach upset, trouble eating
- Trouble sleeping & exhaustion
- Pounding heart, rapid breathing
- Severe headache if thinking of the event, sweating
- Failure to engage in exercise, diet, safe sex, regular health care
- Excess smoking, alcohol, drugs, food
- Worsening of chronic medical problems

*Or have more emotional troubles such as:*

- Feeling nervous, helpless, fearful, sad
- Feeling numb, unable to experience love or joy
- Avoiding people, places, and things related to the event
- Being irritable or outbursts of anger
- Becoming easily upset or agitated

### Common problems that can occur

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Self-blame, guilt and shame
- Suicidal thoughts—*Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or visit the website, [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)*
- Anger or aggressive behavior
- Alcohol/Drug abuse

### Recovery

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, almost everyone will find themselves unable to stop thinking about what happened. Many will also exhibit high levels of arousal. For most, fear, anxiety, remembering, efforts to avoid reminders, and arousal symptoms, if present, will gradually decrease over time.

Use your personal support systems, family and friends, when you are ready to talk. Recovery is an ongoing gradual process. If your emotional reactions are getting in the way of your relationships, work, or other important activities you may want to talk to a counselor or your doctor.

**An Employment Assistance Program counselor can help. See contact information on page 2...**

## Message to New Orleans VA employees from the director

This is the first chance that I have had to communicate with employees since the Medical Center was evacuated on Friday, Sept. 2, 2005.

I am very grateful that everyone who we have heard from is safe. We have found most of our employees.

I am sorry that I was correct in predicting the extreme conditions that would exist if a Category 3 or higher hurricane struck the city. It is a good thing that so many employees and their families were strongly encouraged to have a plan to evacuate the city.

While we stressed that families who accompanied employees working during the hurricane needed to bring their own water, food and comfort supplies, we are pleased that we were able to provide two meals a day to these family members with the exception of one day which only one meal was provided.

I want to extend my appreciation for the assistance from family members in moving patients down the stairs in order to evacuate them from the facility. It is admirable when people come together to complete acts of kindness and that no one was harmed during this important and essential task in securing the safety of the patients.

In reference to the authorized absence situation, decisions were made at the VISN 16 level considering all employees affected by the hurricane, not just those at the New Orleans VA Medical Center. Everyone will continue to be paid while placements are being finalized. Employees at temporary duty stations will receive per diem while housing options are being handled by the individual facility.

There have been many questions about the status of the actual buildings of the New Orleans VA Medical Center and the facility's future. There are as many rumors as there are questions. No firm decisions have been made. Employees will be informed of any decisions when they are made.

In the meantime, to serve and care for our veteran patients, there have been mobile clinics established in Hammond, Slidell and Laplace. There is a strong possibility that more satellite clinics will be set-up as needs are determined.

Currently, the Medical Center's senior management is working in Jackson, MS. We plan to visit New Orleans VAMC employees in Shreveport, LA and Alexandria, LA sometime this week. A trip to meet with employees in Houston, TX is in the planning stages for a later date.

I will continue to communicate with you as information becomes available.

Again, I want to stress my gratitude and appreciation for all of your commitment and dedication to the safeguarding of our nation's veterans. You all can certainly consider yourselves leaders in quality, compassionate and safe healthcare. I could not be more proud of the employees of the VA Medical Center, New Orleans, LA.

John D. Church, Jr.

New Orleans VA Medical Center Director

## Employee Assistance contacts

Employees who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina and want counseling, are urged to contact the Employee Assistance Program Coordinator at one of the following facilities—

### Alexandria VA Medical Center

Tina Eyre, LCSW  
318.473.0010, Ext. 2857

### VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System

Gus Sison, PhD  
228-563-2821 (Office)  
228.806.9643 (Cell)  
228.850.8431 (Pager)

### Fayetteville VA Medical Center

Shirley Thurston, LCSW  
479.444.5065

### Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

Audrey Dawkins-Oliver, LCSW  
713.791.1414, Ext. 6881

### G.V. Sonny Montgomery VA Medical Center

Linda Gladney, LCSW  
601.362.4471, Ext. 1485

### Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Craig Provost, PhD  
501.257.6599

### Muskogee VA Medical Center

Juli McNeil, LCSW, MSW  
918.680.3699

### Oklahoma City VA Medical Center

Richard A. Carothers, PhD  
405.270.5168

### Overton Brooks VA Medical Center

Shirley Shipley, LCSW  
318.221.8411, Ext. 6518

#### About After the Storm

The *After the Storm* newsletter is a publication produced by the South Central VA Health Care Network in an effort to supply updated information to those affected by Hurricane Katrina as we continue to recover from this devastating storm.

This newsletter will be published on a recurring basis. For more information about the publication or to provide story ideas or information, call April Smith, writer/editor, VISN 16, at 601-364-7902.

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## VA employees who have NOT made contact with VA

Eighty-nine percent of New Orleans VA employees and 99 percent of VA Gulf Coast employees have been in contact with the VA after hurricane Katrina. The following is a list of employees who have not yet made contact with the VA. If you know the whereabouts of any of these employees, please have them contact the VA. New Orleans VAMC employees should call 1-888-766-2474. VA Gulf Coast (Biloxi and Gulfport) employees should call 228-523-5000 and speak with their supervisor.

### VA Gulf Coast

Barlow, Ronald	Colins, Lynton	Jacques, Patricia	Murphy, Ronald	Slater, Julia
Brown, John W	Crabtree-Hartman, E	Johnson, Dennis	Mustiful, James Pat	Smith, Aaron
Capiola, Patricia	Davis, Allan	Johnson, Gaylynn M	Nakamura, Shawn J	Smith, Charlene M
Graves, Obaury L	Davis, Lynn	Johnson, Joseph	Neal, Trina D	Soulet, Christine
Moore, Robert C	Debrule, Daniel	Johnson, Michelle A	Nesbitt, Lee T Jr	Spencer, Sharon
Pearson, Sandra K	Dixon, Funches	Johnson, Michelle D	Neyland, Anavernyel	Sullivan, Julia K
Robinson, Rennetta H	Dixon, Hubert	Johnson, Stanley	O Bryant, Sid E	Sylvester, Barry S
Sims, Lonnie C	Dorsett, Peter E.	Jones, Henry Jr	Owens, Larry	Taylor, Vickie
Walker, Norris K	Dorsey, Ellen	Jones, William	Payne, Myrtle L	Taylor-Kimbrough, TC
Williams, Igenea	Doyle, Mittie	Joseph, Joyce	Peters, Alvin	Terrell, Geneva D
Winters ,Samantha L	Drewes, Wayne	Koenig, Cherie M	Phillips, Kathy	Terry, Lisa
	Durgin, Christopher	Lafitte, Idabell M	Pichon, Lester L	Thomas, Adam A
	Edmunds, John	Larkin, Michael W	Pittman, Sonya	Thomas, Alvin
	Epps, Joseph	Le, Kim T	Porter, Carlette	Thomas, Gerald
	Everett, Kenneth	Ledoux, Emma	Porter, Diane	Thomas, Raju
	Ford, Claire	Lertora, Juan J	Preau, Lynn	Thomas, Willard Jr
	Ford, Leroy	Leverett, Tyler	Prince, Gwendolyn C	Thornton, Jean
	Foster, Alyce	Logan, Eddie J	Quevedo, Reinaldo	Tran, Thien Lan T
	Foster, Russell	Lumas, Consuella J	Raibstein-Peralta, L.D.	Tuft, Helen A
	Francis, Vernon	Lundy, Phillip	Reed, Curry J	Vaughn, Wilbert Jr
	Franklin, James	Lunkins, Kevin	Reed, Cynthia	Walden, Heather
	Friedlander, Paul	Luppens, David	Rhodes, Betty J	Walker, Philpatrick
	Ge, Lin-Jun	Maack, Linda	Ricard, Joseph	Wang, Yizarn
	Gibson, Montrell	Mansion, Avanette D	Ricciardi, James E	Warner, Kathy
	Gilds, Ebony	Manuel, Henrietta	Rigby, Peter L	Washington, Harold B Sr
	Golson, Anthony	Manuel, Linda	Rivera, Guillermo	Washington, Lionel
	Gould, Linda	Mar, Charleen	Roach, Nancy	Watlter, Gloria
	Gray, Irving Jr.	Martin, Jerome	Robertson, Kathleen	Watson, Irma
	Griffin-Bramlett, C	Mays, Jamail	Robertson, Tommie	Weintraub, Sharon
	Hadnot, Kenneth	Mazzanti, Dean	Robinson, Kimberly	Welch, George
	Hamm, Lotuce	Mceween, Terri Ann	Robinson, Shirley	Weyer, Susan
	Harper, Leah	McGee, Herbert Jr	Rome, Daniel	White, Lee
	Hartmann, Erica	McKay, Brenda	Rose, Granville	Wild, Laurianne G
	Hellstrom, Wayne	McNabb, Darrie W	Sabatier, Sonia M	Williams, Arthur
	Henderson, Aaron	Melgar, Miguel A	Sakauye, Kenneth	Williams, Joseph
	Hill, Marion	Menard, Susan D	Sam, Charles	Wilson, Scott
	Horton, Steve	Mercado, Ramona	Schroeder, Mae R	Wilson, Venessa
	Hunt, John P	Miller, Paula	Sheahan, Claudie	Witkin, Brian
	Hunter, George	Mitchell, Marcia S	Sheahan, Malachi	Woltering, Eugene
	Irwin, Randall	Mondy, Jerome	Sievertsen, Erik E	Young, Aqua
	Iszard, Erica	Moses, Josie	Simoneaux, Celia	Young-Cannon, Danielle
	Jackson, Linda	Mosquera, Luis F	Simpson, Estrelita	Zimmerman, Kate

### New Orleans