

September 1, 2005

Memorandum

To: All U.S. Department of the Interior Employees – Nationwide
From: Secretary /signed/
Subject: Hurricane Katrina Recovery Efforts

Each of us has been staggered by the devastation that Hurricane Katrina has wrought upon the Gulf Coast Region. Our hearts and our prayers go out to all of those who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and even their lives in this catastrophic event.

As Katrina approached, those who serve at the Department of the Interior prepared for the worst. Department of the Interior bureaus efficiently activated their emergency plans, securing facilities and evacuating employees. As a result, fortunately, we have not received report of death or serious injury to Department of the Interior employees. However, we are continuing to account for employees who evacuated the area with their families.

Interior has significant responsibilities in the areas hit hard by Hurricane Katrina. The Minerals Management Services manages the Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production that accounts for nearly one-third of total domestic energy production. The National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service manage dozens of park units and refuges in the area. The Bureau of Indian Affairs works with local tribes. USGS does critically important stream gage monitoring, so vital to providing advance warning of floods.

Hundreds of employees are already beginning to provide emergency response in the wake of the disaster. About 400 Department of the Interior firefighters will be sent to the Gulf to provide emergency services. MMS crews are working to restore energy production. Bureau of Reclamation engineers will be providing their technical expertise.

Our work has just begun though. Providing personnel and resources to meet the countless needs of the recovery will require us to make difficult choices.

The priorities of the Interior Department should be as follows:

- Assure public safety, emergency access and vital emergency services on Interior lands and for Tribal communities.
- Support the Federal effort to assist State and local government emergency response under the National Response Plan.
- Assess damage to infrastructure and facilitate restoration of vital infrastructure and services.

For those of you responding to this emergency in the devastated areas, I wish you speed, safety, and strength.

For those of you serving outside of Katrina's impact area, I ask two things:

First, I ask you to consider giving generously to organizations like the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army that are providing relief to the recovery effort. Cash donations are especially helpful, allowing victims to meet the specific needs that they might have.

Second, I ask for your restraint, that you not rush to the affected areas unless you are directed by your bureau or a volunteer organization. Recovery efforts must be coordinated by professionals. Self-dispatched efforts may actually hinder the effort.

Working together, we can help the Gulf Coast recover and rebuild.