



News Release

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Susan Poff, Public Affairs Officer
Dallas VA Medical Center
4500 South Lancaster Road, Dallas, TX 75216
214 857-1158 (daytime)
214-927-4488 (after hours)
susan.poff@.va.gov

September 10, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VANTHCS Emergency Personnel on Standby to Receive Patients at D/FW

DALLAS – As officials watch the development of Tropical Storm Ike, for the second time in as many weeks, VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) has been activated as a Federal Coordinating Center (FCC) for the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). One of 17 VA-operated Federal Coordinating Centers across the country, VANTHCS's role is to recruit hospitals and maintain local non-Federal hospital participation in the NDMS; coordinate exercise development and emergency plans with participating hospitals and other local authorities in order to develop patient reception, transportation, and communication plans; and, during system activation, coordinate the reception and distribution of patients being evacuated to the area. Assisting with emergency preparedness is the fourth mission of the VA, and one that fortunately is not required very often.

Although FCCs have been around for about 20 years, Hurricane Katrina was the first time they had ever been activated under the NDMS. During that time VANTHCS emergency personnel, along with city and county emergency responders, unloaded five planes with 222 patients who had been air lifted from the devastated Gulf Coast region to Carswell Field at the Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth. "During Hurricane Katrina, our VA personnel were the faces of the NDMS here locally," said Joseph Dalpiaz, Director, VA North Texas Health Care System.

The Dallas VAMC Patient Reception Team is currently on standby to begin receiving patients at D/FW International Airport from the Corpus Christi area. VANTHCS may expect to receive veteran or civilian evacuees, and many will be dispersed to other area hospitals that are now on alert under the NDMS plan.

The National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) is a federally coordinated initiative that augments the nation's emergency medical response capability. The four federal partners in NDMS are Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Public Health Service), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Defense, and Department of Veterans Affairs. The overall purpose of NDMS is to establish a single national medical response capability for assisting state and local authorities in dealing with the medical and public health effects of major peacetime disasters; and providing support to the military medical system in caring for casualties resulting from overseas armed conflicts.

Access more information on NDMS at: <http://www1.va.gov/EMSHG/page.cfm?pg=45>

###