

USA SERVICES

USA Services: Helping Government Help Citizens by Answering Telephone Inquiries

Partner Agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The Situation

When four major hurricanes struck the southeastern United States over a period of six weeks, thousands were left homeless. As individuals and businesses filed applications for disaster assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA faced the challenge of calling back tens of thousands of disaster victims to gather additional information in order to help them. And it was necessary to make the calls quickly to get help to the victims as soon as possible.

How USA Services Helped:

Within 48 hours of submitting its statement of work to USA Services, FEMA had in place a contact center prepared to complete 30,000 interviews during the first seven days and to conduct additional interviews over a 90-day period. The center operated from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. eastern time and exceeded FEMA's expectations by making 73,000 outbound calls and responding to 2,000 inbound calls during the first nine days of operation.

USA Services was able to respond quickly to FEMA's request for assistance by awarding the first task order under its new FirstContact contract. This contract vehicle, effective in July 2004, provides federal agencies access to five pre-qualified contractors who specialize in providing contact center services and solutions tailored to individual agencies' needs.

FEMA's Assessment:

"Because of the massive impact of the hurricanes, we needed additional call centers to assist people as quickly as possible," said FEMA Recovery Division Director Dan Craig. "USA Services staff members were very professional and knowledgeable, and they were willing to work over the weekend to help us get a contact center operational. We submitted a request at noon on Friday and were conducting interviews on Sunday. We have been impressed with the contractor, and we're considering them for additional work."

Contact: Stuart Willoughby, (202) 501- 9121, stuart.willoughby@gsa.gov