

## **White House “Katrina Report” praises volunteer efforts of Southern Baptists, other faith-based groups**

ALPHARETTA, Ga. – In its report released this week on the response to Hurricane Katrina – called “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina, Lessons Learned” – the White House praised and commended faith-based organizations including Southern Baptists for their quick and coordinated work to aid storm victims in the Gulf States.



NAMB Disaster Relief volunteers

The 228-page document said “faith-based organizations. . . provided extraordinary services. For example, more than 9,000 Southern Baptist Convention North American Mission Board (NAMB) volunteers from 41 states served in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. These volunteers ran mobile kitchens and recovery sites.”

Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in American history – leaving more than 1,300 dead in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, hundreds of thousands homeless and without jobs, and tens of billions of dollars in damages to homes, businesses and the Gulf Coast landscape.

“The Southern Baptist Convention, North American Mission Board and other faith-based organizations provided food and shelter to many evacuees and helped them find temporary and permanent housing,” the White House report noted.

However, the report also chided the federal government for not adequately integrating faith-based and non-governmental groups into the overall response effort.

“Over the course of the Hurricane Katrina response, a significant capability for response resided in organizations outside of the government,” the report said. “Non-governmental and faith-based organizations, as well as the private sector, all made substantial contributions. Unfortunately, the nation did not always make effective use of these contributions because we had not effectively planned for integrating them into the overall response efforts. These groups often encountered difficulties coordinating their efforts with federal, state

and local governments, due to a failure to adequately address their role.

“We must recognize that non-government organizations play a fundamental role in response and recovery efforts and will contribute in ways that are, in many cases, more efficient and effective than the federal government’s response. We must plan for their participation and treat them as valued and necessary partners,” according to the White House report.

As a result of NAMB and the 41 state Southern Baptist conventions which mobilized disaster relief, more than 14.4 million meals were prepared and served to hurricane victims and disaster volunteers. Almost 17,000 cleanup and recovery jobs were completed by Southern Baptist volunteers throughout the Gulf Coast area.

Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers contributed almost 165,000 “volunteer days” in the aftermath of the hurricanes. Using a pay-rate of \$17 an hour for an eight-hour day, the labor value of Baptist volunteer relief work equated to some \$22.4 million.

Separately, over 1,900 Southern Baptist churches nationwide have committed to “adopt” – over a 1 to 2-year period -- one of the 400 hurricane-damaged Baptist churches in the affected Gulf States. The list of severely damaged churches includes 163 churches in Louisiana, 188 in Mississippi and 49 in Alabama. Some of the most damaged churches have as many as 12 different adopting churches supporting them.

(North American Mission Board)