



# News Release

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### **Social Security Responds to Hurricane Katrina Agency Issues More Than 30,000 Emergency Checks to Date**

“Social Security has moved quickly to ensure that monthly payments get to beneficiaries affected by Hurricane Katrina and that other vital Social Security services are provided,” Jo Anne Barnhart, Commissioner of Social Security said today. “As we have all witnessed, the Gulf Coast is coping with destruction and loss of life that is utterly unfathomable. To ensure that beneficiaries will continue to receive their monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income payments, I have invoked immediate payment procedures that permit on-the-spot payments to be made to anyone who can no longer access their benefit check. I am pleased to report that, so far, Social Security has issued more than 30,000 immediate payments and that number continues to grow.”

Information for the public is available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/emergency](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/emergency) or by calling 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

Since September 1<sup>st</sup>, Social Security has provided immediate payments to evacuees who are not able to receive their monthly benefits, whether by mail or direct deposit. Beneficiaries can go to any open Social Security office and receive an immediate payment by check that replaces the full amount of their Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment.

In addition, Social Security is providing immediate payments and other vital services to the affected areas and to evacuees in other locations through a variety of means:

- A temporary office has been opened in the Houston Astrodome and is providing service seven days a week.
- Social Security representatives are serving the public at evacuation centers throughout the U.S., such as the Baton Rouge River Center.
- Social Security employees are onsite at FEMA’s Family Assistance Centers, such as the FEMA site in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. We anticipate having representatives onsite at similar centers in Pascagoula, Moss Point and Waveland, Mississippi and in Shreveport and Monroe, Louisiana.
- Many Social Security offices are offering extended hours of service and remained open throughout the Labor Day weekend to help evacuees.

Social Security and the United States Postal Service also established temporary mail delivery stations in areas where mail service was suspended due to damage from Hurricane Katrina. Beneficiaries still remaining in those areas could pick up their checks at those locations.

Social Security is working with federal, state and local officials in affected areas to assist families who may now be eligible for Social Security benefits. Emergency procedures have been implemented that will allow expedited processing of applications for survivors benefits or other Social Security benefits.

For evacuees who have lost their identification documents, Social Security has put in place a simplified protocol for verifying identity to provide them with the Social Security information they need to apply for jobs or assistance from other agencies.

“I am proud of the hard working and dedicated Social Security employees who are doing everything possible to ensure beneficiaries continue to receive their monthly payments,” Commissioner Barnhart said. “Over the past several days I have heard heartbreaking stories from our employees, some of whom have lost their own homes. Yet, through all of this, their spirit and compassion remains strong. I can assure those affected that we will continue to be there to serve them as our nation copes with the devastation left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.”

### Facility Information

There are ten Social Security facilities that remain closed in Louisiana. These include field offices in Covington, New Orleans Westbank, New Orleans East, New Orleans Bywater, New Orleans Downtown and Kenner. Also closed are the New Orleans Teleservice Center, hearings offices in New Orleans and Metairie and the New Orleans Disability Determination Service.

There are two Social Security facilities that remain closed in Mississippi. These are the Gulfport and Moss Point field offices.

### Beneficiary Data

In Louisiana, more than 400,000 Social Security beneficiaries reside in the counties affected by Hurricane Katrina. These beneficiaries receive more than \$325 million in monthly benefits. In addition, there are almost 91,000 SSI recipients residing in these counties receiving over \$39 million in monthly benefits.

In Mississippi, almost 127,000 Social Security beneficiaries reside in the counties affected by Hurricane Katrina. These beneficiaries receive almost \$102 million in monthly benefits. In addition, there are over 22,000 SSI recipients residing in these counties receiving almost \$9 million in monthly benefits.

In Alabama, almost 125,000 Social Security beneficiaries reside in the counties affected by Hurricane Katrina. These beneficiaries receive over \$104 million in monthly benefits. In addition, there are over 21,000 SSI recipients residing in these counties receiving almost \$9 million in monthly benefits.