

Cash Assistance Best When Contributing

(MSC News)--The Kansas Division of Emergency Management is urging Kansans who wish to help the victims of Hurricane Harvey on the Gulf Coast, to donate money to a reputable volunteer, charitable or faith-based organization rather than sending food, clothing or other goods.

“Too often, well-meaning people send clothing, diapers, and other items to disaster stricken areas, but their donations end up unused or even discarded,” said Angee Morgan, deputy KDEM director. “The reason is that these goods must be sorted, packaged and stored until they can be distributed, which diverts manpower from other tasks and requires a place to warehouse the items. In some areas, there may not be any place available to do this. Also, there is often a surplus of one thing and not enough of another.”

Transporting and distributing the goods also requires manpower that can be better used in other capacities. Food must also be stored until used. If there is no refrigeration available, perishable foods may become unusable before they can be distributed. Even nonperishable goods can be a problem; one can only use so many cans of green beans.

Donating money allows human services agencies to purchase exactly what is needed when it is needed and does not waste resources. It also puts money back into the local economy, helping local businesses recover faster.

KDEM also urges volunteers not to self-deploy. You may be heading to areas that are not safe. If you become injured because you lack proper training and safety equipment, you have only added to the problem. Too much manpower in a given area can be as much of a problem as too little because volunteers must be fed and sheltered, taking away resources from the disaster victims.

It is better to register with a reputable volunteer organization, outlining the skills and/or equipment you have available. If those skills and equipment are needed in a particular area, you will be contacted.

Hurricane Harvey is still an active storm and response measures require skilled, trained personnel. Currently, the Kansas National Guard has a number of Soldiers and Airmen on standby, ready to deploy if they are requested.

The recovery process in these hurricane-stricken states will be long and slow; volunteers are going to be needed for months, if not years. It is better to donate money now and volunteer your time and energy later when the situation is not as dangerous and the needs have been properly assessed.

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