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Gov. Perry Suspends Hotel Motel Tax For Victims Of Hurricane Ike

Urges residents to follow evacuation warnings

September 12, 2008

AUSTIN - Gov. Rick Perry tonight announced he is suspending the collection of the state and local hotel and motel taxes under the Texas Tax Code for victims of Hurricane Ike for a period of 14 days, backdated to September 8, 2008. The governor also urged residents in Hurricane Ike's path to heed local evacuation orders and assured residents that the state is dedicating all of the resources necessary to protect Texans.

"My message to Texans in the projected impact area is this: finish your preparations because Ike is dangerous and he's on his way. If your local officials tell you to evacuate, follow their instructions," Gov. Perry said. "Our responsibility at the state level is to support these local leaders with the resources they need to prepare their communities to weather a storm event, then recover from its impact."

Mandatory evacuation orders have been issued by local officials in Brazoria, Galveston, Jefferson, Orange and Chambers counties, as well as parts of Harris and Matagorda counties. Voluntary evacuation orders have been issued for Victoria, Hardin, and Jackson counties.

The state is assisting with ground and air evacuations in these areas, including the evacuation of the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston, and medical and non-medical special needs residents who are unable to self-evacuate.

According to the National Weather Service, Texas remains in the projected path of Hurricane Ike, which is currently a category two hurricane with winds up to 100 mph. As Ike moves over the warmer waters of the Gulf of Mexico over the next 12 to 24 hours, it is expected to strengthen before making landfall just west of Galveston Island.

In preparation for Ike's landfall, an estimated 945 buses, 575 ambulances, 100 paramedic buses and 350 wheelchair accessible vans are actively involved in state assisted evacuations. Additionally, the statewide shelter network is activated with 79 shelters currently available.

To date, Texas has taken the following actions:

Texas Military Forces: Up to 7,500 guardsmen are involved in pre-landfall operations and are staged in anticipation of Ike's landfall. Evacuation missions are ongoing using C-130 aircraft to transport medical and special needs residents from Beaumont to College Station. TMF are presently supporting evacuations and sheltering missions by ground and air.

Texas Engineering Extension Service: Texas Task Force 1 and Texas Task Force 2 personnel and resources

are pre-staged in San Antonio and Houston for potential search and rescue capabilities. Personnel are also actively engaged in pre-landfall evacuations.

Texas Department of Transportation: Dynamic message signs are being used to urge residents along the coast to fuel up their vehicles. TxDOT reminds drivers along the Gulf Coast to fill their fuel tanks. For information on road conditions and/or evaculanes, please visit: www.dot.state.tx.us

Texas Department of Public Safety: More than 500 troopers are pre-staging in Beaumont and other locations, and Regional Disaster District operations centers have been activated in Houston, Beaumont, San Antonio and Corpus Christi. A fixed-wing airplane is being moved to Houston and two helicopters are being repositioned closer to the coast. A total of four fixed-wing DPS airplanes are surveying traffic in evacuation areas.

Texas Department of State Health Services: DSHS is coordinating air and ground evacuation of hospitals and people with medical special needs from Texas coastal areas. DSHS is monitoring shelters for prescription services, public health and sanitation needs. The Rio Grande State Center/South Texas Health Care System evacuated clients and patients to Kerrville on Wednesday.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission: The state's 2-1-1 information and referral network responded to more than 17,000 calls Wednesday. The 2-1-1 network provides information on evacuation routes, shelter locations, transportation assistance and other resources.

Department of Aging and Disability Services: DADS is evacuating residents of Richmond State School today. Wednesday, the agency evacuated Corpus Christi State School. The state schools serve Texans with profound development disabilities and other health issues. The agency also is working with nursing homes and other licensed long-term care facilities in areas that are evacuating.

Department of Family and Protective Services: DFPS activated a hotline and an online survey for foster parents to report the location and condition of children in their care in the event evacuations are necessary. Information on this and other resources are available on the DFPS website, www.dfps.state.tx.us.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice: The Texas Department of Criminal Justice evacuated three facilities early Thursday morning, including: 1,068 inmates evacuated from the Clemens Unit in Brazoria County to TDCJ units in the Palestine area; 1,561 offenders at the Terrell Unit in Brazoria County evacuated to units in the Huntsville area; and 402 female offenders evacuated from the Carole S. Young Medical Facility in Texas City to the Gatesville Unit in Gatesville.

Weekend visitation has been canceled at a number of TDCJ units throughout the state. A complete list of facilities which will not be having visitation this weekend is available on TDCJ's Web site at <http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/> Family members wishing to seek information on incarcerated offenders may contact TDCJ's 24-hour Hurricane Hotline at 936-437-6127.

Texas Youth Commission: The TYC began the evacuation of all youth from the Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility in Beaumont. The approximately 178 youth will be temporarily housed at four other inland TYC facilities - the Crockett State School in Crockett, the Corsicana Regional Treatment Center in Corsicana, the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, and the McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility in Mart.

TYC will notify the youths' family members after they reach their destinations. Approximately 50 TYC staff members from the AI Price unit have accompanied the youth on this evacuation. Additionally, the York Halfway House in Corpus Christi has evacuated its youth to the Tamayo House in Harlingen. The district offices in Houston and Galveston will close Thursday afternoon and are scheduled to reopen Monday, September 15.

Texas Forest Service: TFS Lone Star State Incident Management Team continues to staff the resource staging area in Lufkin, and incident management teams are positioned in San Antonio and Corpus Christi.

Texas Department of Agriculture: TDA continues to identify food commodities that may be distributed to shelters. The agency is also distributing a Disaster Resource Information Packet to assist agricultural producers in recovering from natural disasters. The packet includes information and contact numbers for state, federal and private agricultural disaster assistance programs, including TDA's hay hotline - a network of hay suppliers for those in urgent need.

Public Utility Commission of Texas: Representatives from AT&T, Entergy, CenterPoint, AEP - Texas Central Company, Texas New Mexico Power (TNMP), East Texas Electric Cooperatives, and ONCOR have activated their emergency operations units. All Texas utility repair crews that offered help in Louisiana for Hurricane Gustav outages have returned. These utilities are prepared to work both within their own service areas and outside their service area as needed.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality: TCEQ is prepared to respond to impacts from Hurricane Ike. A strike team capable of handling hazardous materials is pre-positioned in Austin and is prepared to participate in re-entry operations into the impact area. TCEQ will also provide strike team assets which will be pre-staged in San Antonio on Thursday. TCEQ is working with local agencies to be prepared to address any environmental impact issues that may result from Ike.

The EPA today granted the State's request for permission to bring in fuel from outside the region affected by Hurricane Ike. The EPA waiver will help expedite delivery of fuel and help ensure adequate fuel supplies along the evacuation routes.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: TPWD has more than 200 game wardens and associated equipment deployed for Hurricane Ike. All of the approximately 500 wardens in the state are preparing to deploy if necessary. Coastal resources include dozens of game wardens based out of Houston and Corpus Christi. More than 50 game wardens are either assisting with evacuations or staging for search and rescue deployment once the storm passes.

In addition, Strike Team 1, a team of game wardens from outside coastal regions, is deployed at a base near Navasota in Grimes County, prepared to enter the affected area as soon as the storm passes and assist with rescues and other aid as needed. Strike Team 1 includes 26 Game Wardens, two Radio Technicians, two Communications Operators, seven airboats, six River boats, one Communications Trailer, and one Fuel Trailer.

Texas Education Agency: The Texas Education Agency has located 190 school buses to be used to for evacuations. These buses are in addition to the 100 buses supplied by the Dallas County schools, which are under contract for state emergencies. The Texas Education Agency has reactivated its hurricane website to provide the public with a list of school closures, which can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/hurricane/>

Texas Department of Insurance: TDI continues to monitor Hurricane Ike and remains in contact with its insurance stakeholder group, the Texas State Disaster Coalition. The department will continue its extended Consumer Help Line hours. TDI is also encouraging Texas consumers to prepare for the storm and offering insurance tips (www.tdi.state.tx.us).

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs: Hurricane housing resources for communities are on the agency's website (www.tdhca.state.tx.us). TDHCA is reminding all affordable housing rental owners statewide to keep their apartment vacancy information current as they supply information to TDHCA. TDHCA will contact community action agencies in the projected path of the storm and advise them that they may be called upon to serve additional persons based on the events transpiring.

Texas Animal Health Commission: TAHC is coordinating with its member agencies and providing assistance to large animal owners in the projected impact areas. TAHC staff are at the coastal disaster districts in Victoria, McAllen and Corpus Christi to help with any animal issues.

Fuel Team: The Fuel Team is working to ensure adequate fuel supplies along potential evacuation routes and monitoring demand increases.

The Emergency Management Council and State Operations Center are fully activated. The State Operations Center is closely monitoring Hurricane Ike, and holding twice daily conference calls with federal, state and local officials, private industry partners, volunteer organizations, and the National Weather Service.

Visit www.governor.state.tx.us/hurricane to contribute to hurricane relief efforts and for the latest information on Hurricane Ike.

Previous Press Release: [Text of Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks: Statewide Preparations for Hurricane Ike](#)

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