

# Preparedness and Response

## DIRECT RELIEF'S PROACTIVE APPROACH TO THE 2008 HURRICANE SEASON



**H**urricanes are an annual potential disaster for people living in and around the Gulf of Mexico, particularly those who are low-income, have chronic medical conditions, or have limited access to transportation to evacuate.

At Direct Relief, the lessons of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are well learned: preparation and well-informed rapid response combine to offer the best defense. Based on its past and ongoing work with healthcare partners in the U.S. Gulf States and the Caribbean, Direct Relief deployed hurricane preparedness medical supplies to ensure the availability of essential resources for U.S. safety-net clinics and international healthcare partners, both of whose services are in high demand during emergencies.

The 2008 Atlantic hurricane season produced a record number of consecutive storms, and ranks as one of the most devastating seasons on record. Five of the 16 named storms were Category 3 or higher, and for the first time on record, six consecutive storms made landfall on the U.S. mainland: Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike.

Direct Relief's hurricane preparedness packs and modules were indispensable to the physicians at the 20 U.S. clinic sites and Caribbean healthcare facilities as well as the evacuee patients they treated. Having medical supplies on hand or close by enabled facilities and organizations to respond quickly to the medical needs of those affected.

### A PROACTIVE APPROACH

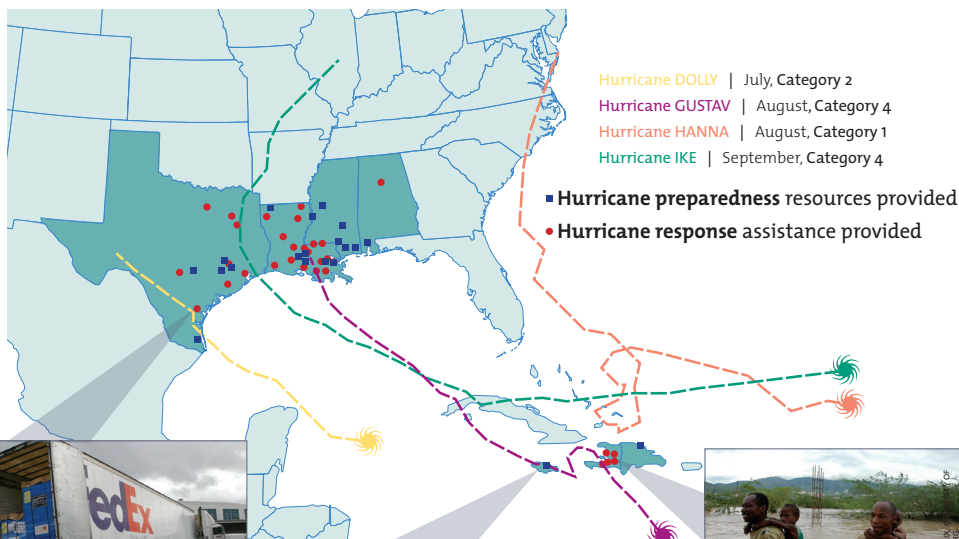
U.S. clinic sites and international partners receiving preparedness packs and modules were selected for their location, past experience with emergency response, patient populations, and capacity to treat victims during a disaster.

Stocked with enough materials to treat 100 patients for 72 hours, the U.S. clinic-bound preparedness packs help providers treat conditions ranging from basic trauma injuries to chronic illnesses. Pack contents were chosen based on Direct Relief's analysis of product shortages following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and in conjunction with the Texas Blue Ribbon Commission on Emergency Preparedness and Response. The larger, international-bound

modules contained anti-infective agents, antibiotics, electrolyte solutions, and adult and pediatric nutritionals—all donated by Abbott. These modules were designed to serve approximately 1,000 people for several weeks.

By sending the packs and modules before the hurricanes struck, delivery delays were eliminated and medical professionals had the tools needed on site to treat the many injuries that occurred as these disasters hit. The preparation also reduced the burden on other area healthcare providers by allowing clinics to treat patients instead of referring them to already over-burdened hospitals and emergency rooms.

Once healthcare providers were through the hurricane season, pack and module contents were absorbed into medical supply inventories, allowing for no waste of resources.



Within 24 hours of each hurricane hitting the U.S., Direct Relief was in contact with and sent assistance to the Texas Association of Community Health Centers and the Louisiana Primary Care Association. In total, Direct Relief provided 54 emergency air shipments valued at more than \$1 million (wholesale) to U.S. health centers and clinics treating hurricane-affected communities.



In collaboration with Abbott, Direct Relief prepositioned \$921,000 (wholesale) of essential medicines and nutrition products in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic to ensure a rapid response in the event of a hurricane.



Immediately following Ike's landfall in Haiti, Direct Relief expedited to Partners in Health—a comprehensive healthcare provider for half a million people living in Haiti—and other local healthcare providers an emergency supply of the most-needed medical items, including antibiotics and nutritional supplements, valued at \$2.3 million (wholesale).

## RAPID, SUSTAINED RESPONSE

The most destructive hurricanes—Dolly, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike—caused casualties and extensive damage in Haiti and the U.S., as well as major flooding in Jamaica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. Direct Relief was in close contact with responding health care partners and agencies, and launched large-scale domestic and international responses. Emergency shipments—valued at more than \$5.7 million (wholesale)—contained over 30 tons of first-aid materials, antibiotics, analgesics, diabetes supplies, and personal care products.

“I WAS INVOLVED IN HURRICANE KATRINA AND BELIEVE ME, WITHOUT YOUR EARLY SUPPORT AND HELP I DON’T KNOW WHAT WE WOULD HAVE DONE. THANK YOU SEEMS SO SMALL A WORD. GOD BLESS YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART AND THE HEARTS OF ALL THOSE YOU HAVE HELPED.”

- Gwen Laury, Louisiana Primary Care Association

Direct Relief also committed \$250,000 in emergency cash assistance for U.S. safety-net clinics, health centers, and alternate care sites at evacuation areas. While evacuations and preparedness prevented injuries and saved lives, many of these responding groups’ facilities sustained structural damage and flooding. The emergency cash bolstered reconstruction and enabled healthcare providers to sustain essential services and care for the surge of hurricane-affected patients. The funds also replenished supplies and equipment and helped cover emergency operating expenses.

## EXPANDING READINESS

In 2009, Direct Relief will distribute new and improved hurricane preparedness packs and modules to last year’s participating healthcare sites and at least ten new sites in Florida, Puerto Rico, and Haiti. Preparedness contents have been fine tuned based on feedback from first responders participating in the program. In this way, Direct Relief is better preparing healthcare professionals to help keep hundreds of thousands of people in vulnerable areas safe.



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PACKS PROVIDED TO U.S. CLINIC PARTNERS CONTAINED MEDICAL ITEMS TO

**TREAT 100 PATIENTS FOR 72 HOURS:**

✓ Anti-infectives **Biaxin** and **Omnicef** tablets from Abbott, **penicillin**, and **doxycycline**

✓ **Atenolol**, **Metoprolol**, and **Digoxin** to treat hypertension

✓ **Mobic** tablets for pain management from Boehringer Ingelheim

✓ **Azmacort** inhalers from Abbott and **Albuterol** inhalers, both for asthma

✓ **Povidine iodine** for preventing wound infections

✓ Anti-inflammatory **ibuprofen** and **Children’s Tylenol** tablets

✓ **Glucose test kits and strips**

✓ **EpiPens** for emergency **epinephrine** doses

✓ **Metformin** for management of diabetes

✓ **Exam gloves**

✓ **Gauze bandages**

“DIRECT RELIEF HAS BEEN GENEROUS IN PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT TO HEALTH CENTERS IN THE GULF COAST STATES AND HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO ADDRESS NEEDS AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE.”

- Malvise A. Scott, Senior Vice President of Partnership and Resource Development of the National Association of Community Health Centers

We are deeply grateful to the following corporations, whose support makes our hurricane emergency preparedness and response possible:

Abbott  
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