

## EVAW International e-News

September 14, 2005

[EVAW International](http://www.evawintl.org) ([www.evawintl.org](http://www.evawintl.org))

### **Special Issue: *Katrina Disaster Relief***

- \*\* Katrina Disaster Relief Donations for Impacted Police Departments
- \*\* Support for Sexual Assault Coalitions
- \*\* Rape-Reporting Procedure Missing After Hurricane
- \*\* Best Practices When Responding to Katrina Victims Who Have Been Sexually Assaulted

#### **Katrina Disaster Relief Donations for Impacted Police Departments**

EVAW International is combining efforts with the [National Center for Women & Policing](http://www.nationalcenterforwomenandpolicing.org) (NCWP – [www.womenandpolicing.org](http://www.womenandpolicing.org)) and [Women in Federal Law Enforcement](http://www.wifl.org) (WIFLE – [www.wifl.org](http://www.wifl.org)) to seek donations in order to purchase items to be distributed to law enforcement professionals in the areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

According to reports coming from the area, the water is so polluted that when officers have to get in it, their clothing and boots cannot be re-used because they have no way to wash them. Cuts on their hands or body fester and infections set in. Officers desperately need the materials to be able to shower and change clothes to maintain their own health.

**PLEASE** help us get these critically needed items to the police departments and precincts that are struggling with the Katrina Hurricane disaster.

1. Blue or black cargo pants
2. Combat boots and socks
3. Flashlights and batteries
4. T- shirts that say POLICE (400 were ordered on 09-08-05)
5. Toiletries (e.g., deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream)
6. Over the counter medications (e.g., aspirin, insect repellent, feminine hygiene products, eye drops)
7. Underwear – men's and women's all sizes

#### **There are two ways you can help.**

First, you can send a donation of supplies to Sgt. Linda Law of the Louisiana Department of Justice, State Attorney General's Office.

Sgt. Law is physically stationed at the New Orleans Greyhound bus terminal from 6 am to 6 pm, and she has graciously offered to accept donations of the following items and distribute them to

the various police precincts in the area. The local Fraternal Order of Police is assisting in the distribution effort. Sgt. Law emphasized that you should NOT SEND CASH directly to her – only supplies.

The address to use for sending supplies is:

Sgt. Linda Law  
New Orleans Department of Justice  
18359 Fortier Lane  
Prairieville, LA. 70769.

Second, you can make a cash donation through EVAW International's website at <https://www.evawintl.org/secure/katrina.asp> and we will use the funds to purchase and send supplies to Sgt. Law in New Orleans. 100% of any donation received will be used to purchase needed supplies.

**PLEASE** give what you can to help. No amount is too small.

## **Support for Sexual Assault Coalitions**

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, many people have experienced sexual violence during the evacuation process. Sexual assault survivors were also among those driven from their homes under traumatic conditions, and many sexual assault crisis centers were shut down or damaged. National partners working to end sexual violence have therefore joined forces and are coordinating efforts to provide assistance to Gulf Coast states affected by Hurricane Katrina, and neighboring states accepting large numbers of evacuees.

The **Relief Fund for Sexual Assault Victims** has been established to collect donations that will aid affected sexual assault victims and advocacy programs. The Fund is designed to:

- Support the needs of sexual assault survivors
- Support the needs of sexual assault advocacy program staff
- Assist with expanded direct service capacity needs
- Assist with prevention initiatives to protect evacuees from sexual violence
- Support relocation/rebuilding efforts for sexual assault advocacy programs

The following state sexual assault coalitions were involved in the development in this fund and will be the primary recipients of funds collected:

[Alabama Coalition Against Rape](http://www.acar.org/main.asp) (www.acar.org/main.asp)

[Florida Council Against Sexual Violence](http://www.fcasv.org) (www.fcasv.org)

[Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault](http://www.lafasa.org) (www.lafasa.org)

[Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault](http://www.mscaa.org/index.php) (www.mscaa.org/index.php)

[Texas Association Against Sexual Assault](http://www.taasa.org) (www.taasa.org)

[PCAR \(www.pcar.org\)](http://www.pcar.org) and the [NSVRC \(www.nsvrc.org\)](http://www.nsvrc.org) have established a website dedicated to the Relief Fund and advocacy efforts: <http://www.relieffundforsexualassaultvictims.org> The fund is designed to support sexual assault coalitions in the following states in their work to assist sexual assault survivors in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

## **Rape-Reporting Procedure Missing After Hurricane**

By Nancy Cook Lauer - WeNews correspondent  
Tallahassee, Fla. (Womensenews)

Distributed September 13, 2005

The following is an excerpt taken from this article:

### **Officials Unclear About Rapes**

Two weeks after Hurricane Katrina pounded the Gulf Coast, advocates for sex-assault victims say officials remain unclear about the number of rapes that may have occurred in the general lawlessness that followed the hurricane.

Police in major evacuation centers such as Houston are not taking reports about crimes that happened in New Orleans, said Judy Benitez, executive director of the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault, based in Hammond, La.

Advocates such as Benitez say that while it's understandable that crime statistics may not have been the priority in the immediate rescue and recovery period, they cannot accept what appears to be the absence in many areas of any process for rapes to be reported if they did occur.

Rapes in New Orleans won't be chronicled in Houston, for example, where 25,000 evacuees were transplanted from the New Orleans Superdome to the Houston Astrodome.

Officials with the Houston Police Department told Women's eNews that police are taking reports only on rapes that reportedly occurred in their own jurisdiction. Two alleged rapes were reported in the Astrodome last week, but both were unfounded, they said.

"Anything that happened in New Orleans, it would be reported to New Orleans and it would be New Orleans that investigated it when everything comes back up in New Orleans," Sgt. Giang Tien told Women's eNews. "The police, they were busy trying to evacuate people. When you are in a disaster zone, you just rush for safety."

### **'Courtesy Reports' Common**

Randy West is chief operating officer of Witness Justice, a national, grassroots nonprofit organization based in Frederick, Md. He said it is common for law enforcement in one jurisdiction to take courtesy reports for law enforcement in another. He said his group is in contact with the U.S. Department of Justice, trying to find a way to streamline the reporting

process. Witness Justice is calling for federal coordination of courtesy reports so local law enforcement will be able to help victims file courtesy reports, no matter where they are.

West said his group has received reports from hundreds of people who were victims of rape, robbery, assault and other crimes while they were in hurricane-stricken areas of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He said victims don't know where to report crimes and are turning to groups such as his for help.

“It's hard enough for people to understand why so little was done to secure their safety and prevent the horrible crimes that are continuing to take place,” Witness Justice President Helga West said in a press statement released Sept. 9. “But the lack of attention to their needs in the aftermath of violence adds insult to injury. We are very concerned about the long-term impact that this traumatization – and re-traumatization – will have on survivors and their families.”

A single place to report crimes, such as a toll-free number, would be difficult to do because crime reports must be taken in person and signed by the complainant, Randy West said.

A detailed message left with a Department of Justice media office employee was forwarded to a media specialist, who did not return a phone call Monday.

### **Stories Going Untold**

With tens of thousands of hurricane survivors moved from the Louisiana Superdome and convention center and scattered to other sites throughout the United States, advocates worry that many of their stories will be lost. Not only will the attackers likely go unpunished, the victims will have a harder time overcoming their trauma and trying to regain a normal life, said Benitez.

She's sure the repercussions will be felt by these victims for years to come. Rape crisis counselors from her organization have been working with hurricane victims throughout the state, she said.

Rapes are to be expected in the chaos that followed the massive storm, Benitez said, especially assaults on the most vulnerable women and children.

“When you have people so desperate and good people mixed with bad, frankly, there is this level of frustration: ‘I don't have power over anything, so I am going to dominate this person’ and it's always the most vulnerable,” Benitez said in an interview with Women's eNews. “We're assuming the real fallout from that will happen later. Over time, I think we'll get a better idea, but I don't think we will ever have a full picture.”

*Nancy Cook Lauer is a journalist in Tallahassee, Fla.*

To review the entire article, go to:

[http://www.womensenews.org/archive\\_results.cfm/dyn/cat/9](http://www.womensenews.org/archive_results.cfm/dyn/cat/9)

For more information:

Health Workers Fly to Aid Female Katrina Survivors:  
<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2443>

Rapes in New Orleans Chaos Were Avoidable:  
<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2439/>

Baton Rouge Television – Charmaine Neville: New Orleans Evacuee [Unfortunately, there have been reports of problems viewing the video, possibly due to browser incompatibilities]:  
<http://www.wafb.com/Global/SearchResults.asp?qu=charmaine+neville&x=14&y=13>

## Best Practices for Law Enforcement When Responding to Katrina Victims Who Have Been Sexually Assaulted

The following is a memo sent to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center regarding EVAW International's recommendations for best practices when responding to Katrina victims who have been sexually assaulted:

Date: September 7, 2005  
From: Joanne Archambault, Executive Director, EVAW International  
To: Professionals in law enforcement, victim advocacy, and related fields  
Re: Responding to the needs of Katrina victims who have been sexually assaulted

In the last few days, we have received a number of calls and e-mails regarding sexual assaults that occurred in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In fact, one member of our Board of Directors, Dr. Michael Weaver recently returned from New Orleans where he was helping to provide emergency medical care, and he brought news of numerous sexual assaults that he heard about while he was there. I would like to respond regarding these reports, because there is a great deal of confusion surrounding the reporting procedures and options for victims in such a situation.

I've compiled several pages of [technical assistance guidelines](http://www.evawintl.org/Downloads/BestPractices.pdf), (<http://www.evawintl.org/Downloads/BestPractices.pdf>) for law enforcement agencies who might receive a report of sexual assault from someone victimized and displaced by the hurricane. These include technical guidelines for taking a courtesy report, and recommendations for the victim interview, evidence collection, and reporting procedures. This information is intended for use both by law enforcement agencies faced with the prospect of such a report, as well as victim advocates and other professionals who provide assistance to sexual assault victims.

I know many of us are feeling frustrated because we are not sure how we can help those who are so profoundly affected by this tragedy. I believe that most law enforcement professionals would also like to be able to help. Taking a courtesy report is a concrete way those agencies and officers can provide assistance, not only to the victims of Hurricane Katrina but also the law enforcement professionals who are struggling to provide assistance and make it through the day.

For more information, please consult helpful resources such as the [Investigating Sexual Assault Model Policy \(May 2005\)](#), [Investigating Sexual Assaults Concepts and Issues Paper \(July 2005\)](#) and [three training keys \(2004\)](#): Investigating Sexual Assaults Part I: Elements of Sexual Assault & Initial Response, Part II: Investigative Procedures, and Part III: Investigative Strategy & Prosecution published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police ([www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org)).

For questions or more assistance, you can also feel free to contact me directly, at (509) 684-9800. I am available to assist law enforcement professionals with questions and concerns in this area, as well as victim advocates and others providing information, assistance, and support to sexual assault victims.