

The following was released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Tuesday afternoon, detailing the work of thousands of volunteers, mostly college students, who will be participating in spring break recovery projects throughout the month of March. This is a effort that Pastor John and the students from Virginia Tech will be participating in from March 4 through 10.

Lutheran volunteers continue to lead the way in the ongoing recovery efforts. Over 800 Lutheran college students will participate this month in the second-ever Lutheran Disaster Response "What a Relief!" spring break. Many of these students will take part in a "gutting blitz" of homes in the city's Orleans Parish. Lutheran Disaster Response is proud to be part of this collaborative effort, bringing help and hope to the people of New Orleans and the entire Gulf Coast region.

Thousands of Volunteers Embark On Massive Gutting in Orleans Parish
FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and city of New Orleans offer support in unprecedented endeavor

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NEW ORLEANS, La. -- In an earnest attempt to accelerate the rebuilding of neighborhoods in Orleans Parish, almost 10,000 volunteer college students from across the nation will arrive in New Orleans in early March to gut thousands of Hurricane Katrina-damaged houses throughout the month.

Both destroyed properties still untouched and partially-gutted houses are eligible for gutting. This includes rentals up to a quad where owners occupy one of the units. Property owners who wish to be included on the consolidated gutting list are urged to call 311 or (504) 658-2093, the city of New Orleans Information Hotline , Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. They will be asked to provide their name, contact information and complete address of the property to be gutted.

The project, an unprecedented gutting effort by a network of partnerships, is spearheaded by the Gutting Taskforce, a newly created team of the Greater New Orleans Disaster Recovery Partnership (GNODRP). This collaboration of nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups and agencies works toward the long-term recovery of the Katrina-affected parishes.

"Because our various groups involved in gutting will have a large influx of students during Spring Break, we decided to join forces in a concentrated collaborative effort,"said Jessica Vermilyea, the spokeswoman for the Gutting Taskforce and the coordinator for Lutheran Disaster Response, one of the volunteer organizations involved in the project. "We are doing this gutting blitz to help people and give them hope. They

are desperate to bring their communities back, and this effort gives them closure on a part of their lives destroyed by the storm and helps them move forward."

Working in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the nonprofit organizations and faith-based groups have already compiled a database of 4,800 houses, which are on the gutting waiting list, throughout Orleans Parish. Homeowners of these properties also need to call 311 to confirm or provide their contact information. Under a mission directed and funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), USACE will coordinate the removal of debris generated by the March massive gutting.

FEMA, a partner of GNODRP, has aided in the formation of the concerted gutting project and continues to facilitate the gatherings of the volunteer groups.

"FEMA believes in partnering with these groups to help those in need. We feel privileged to be part of this effort," said Mary Sutton, a FEMA voluntary agency liaison.

The voluntary groups working on the gutting projects include Lutheran Disaster Response, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Disaster Response, Samaritan's Purse, Episcopal Disaster Response, Louisiana Methodist Conference/UMCOR, Operation Nehemiah, ACORN, Catholic Charities Operation Helping Hands, Operation Blessing, Nazarene Disaster Response, Campus Crusade for Christ, Katrina Corps and Celebration Church.

FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident, initiates mitigation activities and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA works closely with state and local emergency managers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=34493>