

REPORT FROM THE GULF:

David Greenhalgh, reporting from the Gulfport Police Department:

The following is an October 2005 update on the situation in Gulfport from FCPO member David Greenhalgh. David is part of the relief effort and has volunteered the next 4-6 months to help coordinate things for the Gulfport Police Department, freeing up one of their members to go back on the road. This liaison position is now part of the management team and crucial to the recovery of the PD's lives, homes and family.

A fund exists now administered by Lt. Leonard Papania 3 Police/3 Fire. The Chief's policy decision today is that it will purchase only materials, not labour. He is asking FCPO to provide and coordinate labour and relying on us for that.

At present the FCPO Command Post is a donated trailer from a local contractor. This arrangement is temporary but is in fact excellent. Accommodations are at a premium right now. Please bear in mind this situation is highly fluid. There are no longer canteen facilities but a well supplied local Fast food outlet is running full stop. Basic supplies of Food and water are in abundance. When accommodations are found for FCPO members:

- **primary and near universal need will be for insulation installers, gyproc installation and finishing** supported by some plumbing and some electrical;
- Generally speaking roofing issues are being covered by insurance as wind damage.

The Gulfport PD is operating well, is well run, well equipped (now), officers are pulling shifts here from as far away as Washington DC, Establishment is roughly 200 sworn, 100 non-sworn. They were 17 under staff and five officers who lost everything have quit and moved out of state so they are about 11% under staffed. All 300 GPD employees have suffered loss. Every story is different. Here are the two extremes:

- One officer has \$10,000 wind damage - is fully insured less \$1,500 deductible;
- One officer lost everything, house and cars, is living in a rental with in-laws who lost house and cars. He has a \$94,000 mortgage neither he or in-laws had flood insurance;
- There are 298 different stories in between, 41 officers lost everything. Vehicles are generally well covered and insurers have been quick to reimburse for cars.

The bulk of damage was called by a "tidal surge" of seawater that came miles inland causing a massive flood. This is not a flood area and is above sea level. The storm surge was not expected, it has never happened before here, and many officers covered only for wind damage. In one ridiculous example, an Officers frame house was gutted by seawater. The intact roof has missing shingles however, was insured only for wind so the payout offered is \$2,400 less deductible. This house is a total loss. Most everyone appears properly covered for "normal" hurricane wind damage. The Ins. Companies are now routinely denying claims for damage below the high water mark.

Power is back on to most damaged homes except those severely damaged/total loss houses. Clean City water is available most places also sewer. There is most likely power available where our members are likely to work, but not in all cases. This has a bearing on use of tools.

Supplies (gyproc - Lumber) are reported readily available. The Chief has contacts who may supply truckloads at reduced prices. The logistics problem is not supply, but the need for covered dry storage that is accessible (and free). Many warehouses have serious roof damage.

Insurance issues are only just starting to be resolved. They are not easy to categorise for our response. As of today I believe there are 41 officers affected who may need our assistance ie. No flood insurance + total loss, **or**, repairable damage. Many officers and some civilian staff are not reporting their needs fully because they view others as worse off. Some of the "others" worse off today, are covered by insurance and better off in the long run. The members have been surveyed in writing 4 times.

FEMA is offering a maximum of \$26,000 relief depending on a variety of circumstances. On total loss officer is reported to have been offered \$19,000. A "mathematician" is reported to have calculated the maximum possible relief available from FEMA, including uninsured vehicles is about \$31,000 under perfect circumstances. There are low interest loans available from a Federal Org. called SBA or small business administration.

Nearby Communities - To the West - City of Long beach was very severely damaged - Police building wiped out. Further West the City of Pass Christian was totally destroyed. Of two buildings left standing one is the water tower. In contrast the larger City of Gulfport has mostly only wind damage to the Northern half of the City. Streetlights are on in the flood damaged downtown, restaurants are opening. Long term economic issues affecting the City are total loss of both tourist and gambling revenue sources - reported to be 2/3 of City revenue.

The Gulfport PD members fought for their families, fought the wind, fought the water, fought looters (On scene right after), fought aggressive queue jumpers and the greedy and selfish when immediate aid arrived on trucks. This was done in an exemplary manner. None abandoned their posts. There were several very dark days after Katrina. GPD is a well run, well managed PD with high professional standards. My immediate GPD colleagues happen to be the entire Internal Affairs section, four officers, tasked with and committed to restoring the lives of their members. They are a fine group of men, a match for the best I have worked alongside in six PD's around the world.

Personal - I am basically working 12 hour shifts although it is not really high stress/high pressure. There is no canteen so we eat out a lot, a bit of a dent in the budget. The last two nights lodgings were adequate although I am suffering an attack of local fleas - maybe Mississippian's are immune! It is actually fun to be back "in harness" working with a dedicated team of caring professionals. Last night I was able to pray with brothers in the Firehouse.

Future planning - *At the moment*, given limited accommodations and assuming full cooperation from the Methodist church, I favour smaller teams of perhaps 4 to 10 persons rotating weekly or bi-weekly, rather than a larger group. A large group would create transport and accommodation difficulties. A weekly rotation would maintain momentum with existing resources. RV equipped volunteers can probably be managed quite well provided numbers are not too large. Two days on the job has not given near sufficient time to evaluate individual needs and where volunteers can help, hopefully, with God's wisdom, the bigger picture will emerge over the next week. Individuals (such as Howard next week) with their own transport are welcome by appointment.

Prayer :- For wisdom, for more wisdom, for better communications (email internet and telephone) for Alec & Laurie Dutt and their preparations.