



KATRINA Daily News

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97th AEG arrives at Keesler to aid humanitarian effort

By 1st Lt. Brady Smith
97th AEG Public Affairs

When the call comes in for an air expeditionary group to deploy, it's usually to a destination with sand, located on foreign soil. Although the sand is still present, this time the big difference is the group was called to deploy inside the United States—right at Keesler.

The 97th Air Expeditionary Group began arriving Tuesday and is comprised of Airmen from all over the States who have been selected to become part of the group which focuses on humanitarian missions.

“Our mission is to provide support capabilities for organizations such as the Mississippi and Federal Emergency Management agencies which request Department of Defense assistance,” said Col. Linda Medler, 97th AEG



Airmen assigned to the 97th Air Expeditionary Group here inventory humanitarian supplies so they can be distributed to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. (U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Brady Smith)

commander. “We are also responsible for supporting the non-governmental organizations to get goods and services out to the communities. We are here to support the humanitarian effort any way we can.”

Upon arrival, the AEG began standing up immediately and, by Thursday, quickly amassed to more than 190 personnel located here and in Gulfport, Miss. The group is in process of relieving Keesler of the responsibility of bedding down individuals associated with FEMA and agencies here to support the humanitarian mission.

“We anticipate that we will be fully operational by Wednesday, which will bring the expeditionary group to about 250 people,” said Lt. Col. Karl Freerks, 97th AEG deputy commander.

Even partially assembled, the group wasted no time finding out where FEMA needed help and put bodies to work.

Thirty-five Airmen sorted through 46 large pallets of medical supplies on Friday to inventory, organize and prepare the supplies for transportation. The supplies are used to restock nine satellite locations along the coast for veterinarian and Disaster Medical Assistance teams. Each remote team provides vital medical services for survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

“God love ‘em!” said Bob Haley, disaster management support team logistics chief, as he drove up and saw all the Airmen hard at work. “For the last eight days I’ve only had two team-



Airmen sift through rows of supplies that have been flown in to Keesler AFB, so they can be inventoried, packaged and distributed to hurricane victims throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast region. (U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Brady Smith)

members here to go through this entire inventory, and without these Airmen it wouldn't have been possible. If we didn't have this kind of help, our teams would be seriously, seriously deficient in our ability to support this mission.”

After all the supplies were inventoried, a small group of Airmen accompanied the delivery truck to five of the satellite locations which were established at hospitals in devastated areas. The Airmen helped unload the supplies at each stop and were humbled by the sight of destruction they witnessed between and at each stop.

“All of these Airmen are doing absolutely incredible work and working long hours—both in the expeditionary group and the 81st Training Wing,” said Col. Medler. “By looking around at what has already been accomplished and what is being accomplished every day, one can see that the practice of ‘service before self’ is alive in the Air Force, federal and state agencies.”

KEESLER BASICS:

General Information

Housing Residents – Beginning noon Monday, personnel who are in the local area, and whose on-base homes are habitable, are directed to resume occupancy of their homes. Also, BAH for military members reoccupying their military family housing and in-place TDY per diem for all military members in the local area will stop. Displaced dependents not in the area will continue to receive entitlements. Personnel who reside off-base and whose residences are habitable are directed to resume residence of their homes immediately. Off-base members are exempt from the local curfew while traveling to/from work. Mission essential civilians who are in the local area will be recalled to return to work Monday.

Uniforms – Uniform Issue will begin 7 a.m. Monday at the Taylor Logistics Building (Bldg. 4002). Uniforms will be issued only to those who lost their uniforms in the hurricane or damaged them during recovery work.

Postal Service – All U.S. Post Office facilities that are now open will operate seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. until mail distribution is caught up.

AAFES – Mini Mall retail store, barber shop and Subway hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. The Service Station remains open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Unattended fueling is available 24 hours with a major credit card.

Food – Both dining facilities are open.

Breakfast: 5:30 to 8 a.m.

Lunch: 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Dinner: 5 to 8:30 p.m.

Services – These services are now open:

Library – 3 to 10 p.m. daily; **Community Center** – 3 to 10 p.m. daily; **Car Wash** – 24 hours daily; **Muse Manor Mini Mart** – 7 a.m. to midnight daily; **Warrior Lounge** – Friday and Saturday 5 to 10 p.m.

Keesler 24-hour bus schedule:
(minutes past the hour)

332nd Training Squadron: 0000/0030

Shoppette/Subway parking: 0000/0032

Welch Theater: 0004/0034

Levitow Bldg.: 0007/0037

CE/Supply bus stop: 0010/0040

Dorm/Tent City bus stop: 0011/0041

5000 block/main gate stop: 0013/0043

Shaw House: 0014/0044

Muse Manor: 0015/0045

Hospital/Tyer House: 0017/0047

Tent City/Comm Sq./Soccer Field:
0018/0048

TALCE/Bldg. 222: 0020/0050

Base Ops: 0022/0052

FEMA contacts – The Federal Emergency Management Agency's main information line is 240-372-6345.

Storage – If you need temporary storage due to the hurricane, contact your group POC. Also, Avery Manor is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for key sign out. POC is MSgt Ransom (DSN 597-3297 or 860-3014).

If you can not fit your articles into a room in Avery Manor, contact Chief Seaton at 697-0874 for clearance to use a container.

Personnel Information

MPF – The military personnel flight is open upstairs in the Levitow Building from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. A walk-in center is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Those with assignments, retirements or separations call DSN 597-3595 for an appointment.

Claims Information

Claims briefings – There will be no claims briefings today. Briefings will resume Monday at 10 a.m. at the Levitow Bldg.

Finance Information

Finance – Limited financial services are available at the Levitow Bldg. from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Customer service hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. To reach a representative for customer service/travel pay related issues call DSN 597-7479.

For budget issues, call DSN 597-2770. Contact a finance representative at DSN 597-7256 for additional information.

Health Care Information

Due to Hurricane Katrina damage, Keesler Medical Center has been vacated and limited medical care is being provided in tents.

Active Duty Military: Care is available at the EMEDS tent hospital located just east of the Sablich Center on Fisher Street. Routine or non-urgent sick call hours are 8-11 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. daily. 24-hour emergency care is available. Limited dental care is available at the Dental Clinic from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and 1 to 2 p.m. For more information, call the clinic at 377-3003.

Retirees, Dependents of Retirees, and Dependents of Active Duty Living Off-Base:

Care is not available at Keesler AFB. Seek care through other Department of Defense medical treatment facilities, TRICARE network providers, or other civilian providers. TRICARE has waived referral requirements for Keesler's TRICARE Prime enrollees. Necessary care can be obtained from any network provider with no preauthorization required.

The toll-free number is (800) 444-5445, or visit TRICARE's Katrina Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/Katrina/index.cfm.

Dependents of Active Duty Living On-Base:

Limited care is available at the EMEDS tent hospital located just east of the Sablich Center on Fisher Street. Other care is available from TRICARE network providers.

Life Skills – Life Skills Support Teams are located in the Fish Bowl and at the EMEDS tent hospital. A mental health provider is on-call 24 hours through the EMEDS.

SARC – Keesler's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator is available 24 hours a day.

If you are the victim of an assault, contact DSN 597-7278 or the Keesler Command Post at DSN 377-4330 for immediate assistance.

Retiree News

Retiree Support Office – A temporary Retiree Affairs and Air Force Aid Office will open in Biloxi Monday at the Family Child Care Center in the Thrower Park Military Family Housing Area. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Retirees will be able to learn about base support services and procedures for applying for Air Force aid, if applicable. For additional information, retirees can call (228) 377-5934/5935 during office hours. The base exchange and commissary are closed due to damage from Hurricane Katrina. Retiree medical care is also not available here, as the Keesler Medical Center was heavily damaged.

Chapel Worship Schedule

The following schedule has been revised. *Please note all services will be conducted in the Fishbowl.*

Sunday: Protestant worship, 9 a.m.

Catholic Mass, 10:30 a.m.

Latter Day Saints, 4:30 p.m.

Protestant worship, 6 p.m.

Wednesday: Protestant mid-week prayer and Bible study, 6:30 p.m.

Friday: Jewish Shabbat service, 6 p.m.