

RESPONSE TO H. KATRINA

**LESSONS
LEARNED**

Effects of the Storm on Personnel

- 30% of the staff lost housing in the Biloxi area
- 100% of the NOVA audiology staff displaced
- Many main roads were closed
 - Veterans had difficulty accessing care
 - Staff had difficulty getting to work
- Bridges were out – Limited alternate work sites
- Food and water in limited supply for many weeks
- “Boil Water” orders affected sanitation for bathing and hand washing

EFFECT ON ALL VA PERSONNEL

- The VA staff at New Orleans and Gulfport were profoundly affected by the loss of their workplace but they 'soldiered' on
- We had a job to do, and as a unit, VA staff did that job in spite of their losses

Vets called about their hearing aids. Where are they?

- NOVA - still on the shelves but no access to the hospital including the data base
- GULFPORT – washed out to sea

HOW TO CARE FOR OUR VETERANS





VA NATIONAL RESPONSE

- WASHINGTON Dr. Beck and Dr. Dennis
 - Contacted manufacturers regarding replacement of hearing aids lost in the storm
 - Obtain agreements to waive time frames for trial period and new aid warranties
 - Obtain agreements to replace lost devices WITHOUT using the one time loss and damage warranty





DDC

- Regina Krawiec, Jim Butard, and Joe Candelaria developed guidelines for the clinics
- Developed process for replacement of hearing aids
- 335 KATRINA WAIVERS ISSUED FROM DDC
- Veterans made direct contact with DDC
- DDC contacted Alexandria and Biloxi
- Automatically changed serial numbers issued to replacement hearing aids





VISN 16 CLINIC RESPONSES

- **ALEXANDRIA**
 - Received NOVA veterans Mostly new hearing tests
 - Some hearing aid delivery of NOVA vets
- **VAGCVHCS**
 - Received NOVA veterans and Mississippi veterans
 - Mostly hearing aid replacements
 - Many hearing test
- **BATON ROUGE**
 - Served as contact point for NOVA veterans
 - Customer Service arranged for data to go to Alexandria and the Gulf Coast
- **OTHER VISN 16 CLINICS**
 - Took care of veterans from other clinics



THE “LOCAL” TEAM

- **BATON ROUGE**
 - LYNN PREAU
 - SANDRA BROWN
- **ALEXANDRIA**
 - ANGIE PONTHER
 - CATINA PEOPLES
- **BILOXI**
 - ERRIE WILLIAMS
 - RAY NICKERSON
 - DR. MATT STROM
 - DR. MISTY DEDEAUX
 - VIRGINIA COLLINS
 - MICHELLE DYESS
 - DR. PETER GANLEY

OTHER VA RESPONSES

- WASHINGTON DC
 - US Armed Forces Retirement Home relocated to DC.
 - Washington VA took care of veterans we had been seeing
 - Most vets needed new aids or were new to the VA

OTHER VA CENTERS

- Louisiana VA's
 - Saw NOVA vets
 - Most needed tests
 - Some Katrina replacements
- Mississippi VA's
 - Saw NOVA vets
 - Most needed tests
 - Some Katrina replacements

Other VA Centers

- Saw displaced vets
- Provided continuity of care

WHAT WORKED

CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT

**CUSTOMER SERVICE,
AUDIOLOGY,
DDC**

WHAT DID WE DO

- **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- Baton Rouge Customer Service (SANDRA BROWN) contacted Biloxi and Alexandria for assistance
- Biloxi's (MARY COOK) and Alexandria's Customer Service expedited enrollment into their systems

- **AUDIOLOGY**

- worked together with customer service to insure easy enrollment resulting in high patient satisfaction



WHAT DID WE DO

- Audiology at Alexandria and Biloxi communicated by personal cell phones until the phone lines were back up to insure veterans got taken care
- Baton Rouge served as a communications hub for New Orleans veterans calling in for help

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Have cell phone numbers for all staff
- If you evacuate, contact the nearest VA to your evacuation point to let them know you are OK
- Be prepared to be very uncomfortable
- Seek help if the frustration and the losses are affecting your life.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Communication systems go **DOWN** in disasters making it difficult to communicate
- Personal cell phones may be your only communication link
- VISTA/DHCP may be out of commission for a while.
- DDC will go out of its way to help you
- Direct contact with Customer Service will smooth the way for veteran care

THINGS YOU NEED BEFORE A DISASTER

- STAFF CELL PHONE NUMBERS TO HELP YOU KEEP IN CONTACT
- PLAN OF RESPONSE FOR STAFF WHO MAY BE DISPLACED
- DATA BACKUP IN A SEPARATE PLACE IS CRUCIAL

LESSONS LEARNED

- SOUND SUITES WILL FLOAT
- RECORDS WILL DISSAPEAR
- AC is wonderful
- AUDIO'S IN CPRS ARE VERY HELPFUL
- REMOTE ACCESS IS A LIFESAVER
 - For progress notes.
 - ROES will let you find audiograms
- AUDIO'S CANNOT BE ACCESSED IN CPRS

FINAL LESSONS

- BE PREPARED
- CO-OPERATION AND PATIENCE
 - ARE
- THE KEYS TO SUCCESS