

2-1-1, Recent Tornadoes, Floods and the Oil Spill in the Gulf

How 2-1-1 Responds in Disasters

2-1-1 is playing a key role in the response to the recent storms and flooding (MS, TN, KY) and with the oil spill disaster in the Gulf. 2-1-1 connects callers with critical disaster services and volunteer and donation opportunities. 2-1-1:

- Provides *information and referral* (I&R) for residents, survivors, donors and volunteers.
- Provides special *tracking* and/or coaching for *donations and volunteers*
- Assists with *rumor control*
- Provides telephone *crisis intervention, comfort and assurance*.
- Maintains quality *database of human service programs*, and regularly posted updated “*tips*” and *resources*
- Provides *call-taking* through skilled I&R Specialists. Note that many 2-1-1s have statewide emergency operations plans to ensure continuity of service by re-routing calls to unaffected areas or distributing calls to other Centers when volume spikes.
- Coordinates *services with government and community-based and faith-based organizations*. In many cases, the 2-1-1 has a formal relationship and an established role within the Emergency Support Functions.

2-1-1 and Flooding in TN and KY (updated May 7, 2010)

Tennessee

- TN 211 is posting updated resource information on its website: <http://tn211.mycommunitypt.com/>
- All television, radio and print media are directing survivors, donors and volunteers to 2-1-1 for information about ways to give and get help.
- Calls to 2-1-1 were 400% higher than normal call volume the first week of May.

Kentucky

- Central and Western Kentucky are preparing for rivers to crest. Areas impacted are highly localized and do not lend themselves to massive local response or sheltering.
- Because 2-1-1 only serves 47% of the state’s population, many affected individuals, particularly in rural communities, have no centralized number to learn where to turn for help.
- 2-1-1 Call centers are working with Kentucky Emergency Management to direct callers to local emergency management operations centers.

2-1-1 and the Oil Spill in the Gulf (updated May 7, 2010)

Mississippi

- Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) requested 2-1-1 provide information for individuals seeking volunteer and related employment opportunities. Volunteers are lining up to cleanup along beaches. 2-1-1 and leaders are working plans for volunteers, housing, etc.
- Note that Mississippi Emergency Management and 2-1-1 are still responding to the tornado that hit April 24, 2010. (FMI <http://www.msema.org/>)

What 2-1-1 Needs

Disaster relief is more effective and efficient when a robust 2-1-1 system is in place. Yet, many 2-1-1 call centers lack the resources needed to build an adequate telecommunications infrastructure, provide appropriate staff levels and training, establish or maintain 24-hour-a-day service, ensure complete and accurate informational databases and reach rural populations. As communities respond to disasters and 2-1-1s everywhere continue to field increased call volume due to the economic downturn, the struggle to maintain adequate capacity remains a vulnerability. The Calling for 2-1-1 Act would provide funding necessary to meet these needs.

Alabama

- The Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives called on 211 Connects Alabama to serve as the number to call to register to volunteer. The majority of calls relate to volunteers seeking to assist with wildlife issues.
- 211 is working closely with Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) to coordinate the response.

Florida

- First Call For Help responded to 2,562 calls (a 300% increase over normal) since May 1 (5 ½ days).
- First Call For Help in Escambia serves as the Emergency Operations Center during disasters, as a part of ESF-15 role. BP, in concert with Escambia VOAD (BRACE) and First Call For Help, registered over 800 volunteers for a 4 hour health and safety training, which is a minimal requirement for volunteers wishing to participate in the oil spill cleanup. Also, they collectively directed nearly 1,000 spontaneous volunteers to two beach pre-landfall cleanups May 1-2.

Louisiana

- LA 2-1-1 is distributing information provided by the Governor’s office, the Dept of Health and Hospitals and Dept of Environmental Quality about volunteer opportunities and how to report any/all wildlife concerns/issues.
- LA 2-1-1 is working with LA VOAD and other nongovernmental organization partners such as LAVOAD, United Way, The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Louisiana Office of Mental Health and Volunteer Louisiana throughout the state to ensure any/all relief efforts are coordinated and citizens have information.