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September 2, 2012

Louisiana Workforce Commission sends teams to help evacuees at shelters in North Louisiana

Baton Rouge, La. – The Louisiana Workforce Commission sent teams of unemployment insurance specialists to state evacuation shelters in Alexandria and Shreveport Sunday to help victims of Hurricane Isaac apply for disaster unemployment assistance.

An LWC strike team set up a network of computers at the state Megashelter on Highway 71 in Alexandria and began assisting evacuees apply online for disaster unemployment assistance. The agency also sent a mobile unit, a customized RV fitted with computers and Internet access, to the state evacuation shelter on Jewella Avenue in Shreveport, where LWC employees continue to provide evacuees with the same services and support. As of Sunday morning, there were 1,806 evacuees at the Shreveport shelter and another 1,180 at the Alexandria Megashelter.

“Deploying our teams to those two shelters was an effective way to reach a lot of people quickly with our services and support,” LWC Executive Director Curt Eysink said. “Our dedicated agency employees worked through the night Saturday to deploy from Baton Rouge, set up and provide service by Sunday afternoon.”

The teams will remain at the shelters as long as the shelter managers want them on site.

“We will continue to take every step we can to help workers endure the challenging days and weeks ahead,” Eysink said. “We’re equally committed to helping employers return to business as usual as quickly as possible.”

Nine Louisiana parishes have been approved for disaster unemployment assistance: Ascension, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany. Residents in those parishes who remain out of work through Sept. 8 as a direct result of Hurricane Isaac will begin to receive benefits. They can reapply weekly for the special disaster assistance benefits, while they remain unemployed as a result of Isaac.

Citizens can apply for disaster unemployment assistance online 24 hours a day at www.laworks.net. Anyone without Internet access or who has trouble filing their claim can contact the LWC call center at 1-866-783-5567.

All LWC offices are scheduled to reopen Tuesday morning, except those in St. John the Baptist Parish. LWC's Business and Career Solutions Centers in Metairie and Gretna remained without power Sunday and decisions on when they'd reopen will be made later. The LWC office in St. Tammany Parish was without Internet service Sunday but was expected to be up and operational Tuesday.

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