Text of Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks – Hurricane Rita Morning Briefing

(NOTE: Gov. Perry frequently deviates from prepared text.)

Good morning. The effort to evacuate people in the path of the storm continues.

Yesterday was the height of an evacuation effort unlike anything we have ever seen before.

Traffic was excruciatingly slow. But the ultimate, immediate goal of getting millions of people out of the impact zone has been achieved.

The important thing is so many Texans took this seriously...they got on the road a full two days ahead of schedule...and they will be safer because of it.

Most of those who braved yesterday's traffic with their families and neighbors were orderly and calm and I thank you for your patience.

I also want to commend law enforcement, transportation officials and local leaders for their efforts to evacuate our citizens.

Yesterday we had 15 airlifts out of Beaumont and have scheduled six more for today...meaning we anticipate airlifting close to 1,500 people from that area alone by the end of the morning.

Airlifts are underway at Ellington field in Houston. We anticipate airlifting 400 people with special needs by the end of the morning.

We have 25 buses canvassing the Beaumont area picking up anyone looking to get out.

Because of the path of the storm, we are working to evacuate 1,500 people from Lufkin, including 400 people with special needs.

We continue to work to get fuel to stranded motorists.

We are making bulk fuel deliveries to Department of Transportation districts, and to TxDOT facilities along evacuation routes.

The Department of Public safety, the Texas Department of Transportation and the Army National Guard will continue to provide motorist assistance in the hurricane impact area.

In addition, we are putting all DPS helicopters at our disposal in the air today to sweep the roads in the impact area.

We are pre-positioning search and rescue personnel, and doing the same for mass care strike teams.

And we will have a strong law enforcement presence in the aftermath of this storm in areas that are impacted.
We are committed to maintaining law and order.

As we speak shelters are filling up all across Texas. We are continuing to make necessary arrangements to provide a haven to all in need.

There is adequate shelter space for Texans who are evacuating. As of 8:00 this morning, the Red Cross had 54 shelters on standby.

I can't say enough about the volunteers who are working to give refuge to our weary coastal residents.

For those who have stayed in the coastal region, we are working to provide shelter space in your area should you decide to leave your home.

Listen to your local officials for locations, and pay attention to their advice concerning whether you have time to evacuate further inland.

And as soon as we can get search and rescue personnel into impacted areas, we will...in full force.

Our hearts also go out to those impacted by the terrible tragedy earlier today, when a bus in Dallas exploded.

There are reports of a number of fatalities and we are awaiting more information concerning the cause, and who was on board.

This is a great test of our people. But we will get through this.

We will get through this because we have prepared for such an event...because so many took the evacuation order seriously...and because this state has thousands of rescue and relief workers that stand ready.

So stay calm...be strong...and say a prayer for Texas.

Thank you.