Gov. Perry thanks emergency management teams after Hurricane Ike

Visits Galveston, Liberty and Hardin Counties

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

It's nice to be here with the good people of this county; I just wish it were under better circumstances.

However, I wanted to come here today to talk to the local leaders who have worked so hard on the process of rescue, re-entry and, now, recovery. I came to look them in the eye and thank them for their work.

I can't tell you how proud I am of the way our state has responded to this situation, from people who have been helping each other in tough situations, to our statewide team who moved resources where they were needed, to officials at the local level like these who have been handling one challenge after another.

These folks embody the Texas values of hard work, leadership and, most of all, neighbors looking out for neighbors. I am proud to be here with all of you today and carry with me the thanks and admiration of our state.

As we made our way here today, it was sobering to see the amount of damage that Ike did when he blew ashore just over a week ago. We saw a lot of homes and businesses that are pretty beat up. Those buildings represent individual Texans who have their work cut out for them as they rebuild their lives, piece by piece.

Fortunately, they are not alone. Texans whose lives have been turned upside down by this storm have a variety of state and federal resources to help them begin that process.

We definitely have our work cut out for us: Ike tore up an area of Texas that is roughly the
size of West Virginia, damaging homes and businesses, destroying wildlife habitat, and chasing thousands of people from their homes. Many of those people have yet to return home, some living in FEMA-funded hotels, others with friends and still others in shelters.

After peaking at more than 42,000 people in our statewide shelter network, I am pleased to say that there are currently less than 14,000 people residing in our shelters.

We are working to connect displaced Texans with the aid that is available to them through FEMA and other federal agencies.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure of standing with Steve Preston, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, to announce a Disaster Housing Assistance Program. Under the program, Texas families who cannot get back into their homes by November 1st because of Ike-related damage can receive temporary rental payments to tide them over.

This means that people who are currently displaced can move out of shelters or their friend’s home and into a place of their own, until their original dwelling is repaired or replaced.

We will continue to press for the maximum amount of federal assistance to help Texans get back on their feet as quickly as possible. This Housing Assistance Program is just another step in that process.

Individuals Texans, companies and other organizations can also help out by giving to the Texas Disaster Relief Fund. This fund is maintained to direct the generous gifts of our citizens to communities in the affected area as they work to rebuild.

Once again, I want to express my appreciation for our local leaders and their stellar effort in the face of incredible odds. You have done our state proud with your hard work, your wise decisions and your enduring regard for your fellow Texans.

Your attitude and, most of all, your actions, continue to show the world what it means to be a Texan.