

PERF delivers \$6.5M for carriers, other postal victims of disasters



Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA

An aerial view of a house that survived the destruction of Hurricane Ike.

With the annual Combined Federal Campaign underway in post offices across the nation, NALC President William H. Young is urging both active and retired letter carriers to consider a donation to PERF—the Postal Employees' Relief Fund—the only CFC charity designed exclusively to help postal employees and retirees.

Although the bulk of attention given to PERF over the past three years has concerned grants to Gulf Coast victims of the 2005 Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, the fund continues to help letter carriers and other postal employees in all 50 states as well as other U.S. jurisdictions, said PERF Executive Committee Chairman Drew Von Bergen, the NALC representative on the committee.

In his "State of the Fund" report at a meeting of the grantors (trustees) of the fund on October 2 at U.S. Postal Service Headquarters, Von Bergen said the fund had issued more than \$6.5 million in grants to postal employees since the group's last meeting in January 2007.

President Young is among the eight grantors. The other seven are Postmaster General John E. Potter and the heads of the other three major unions and three management associations.

In a letter to presidents of NALC's largest branches in October, President Young urged them to distribute brochures about PERF, and he encouraged members both active and retired to pledge donations through the CFC to PERF and other charities.

"You all are aware of the devastation caused when Hurricane Ike recently struck the Galveston, Texas, area, and that came after Hurricanes Fay and Gustav damaged many homes in several states," Young said. "This all was on top of the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005, which affected thousands of postal employees."

More than 90 percent of PERF's funds comes from pledges during the annual CFC campaign. PERF's CFC number is 10268.

PERF issues outright grants of up to \$14,000 to active and retired postal employees—union-represented and management alike—to help them rebuild their lives after damage from natural disasters and home fires.

In his report, Von Bergen said, "Subject to the whims of the market, the fund is in good shape, doing what it's supposed to do—issuing grants to active and retired postal employees—while trying to keep up a flow of income for the continual hurricanes, tornados, fires, etc."

He noted that since the last grantors' meeting, the state of Louisiana has finally processed most of the applications made to its "Road Home" program, which provided grants up to \$150,000 to qualifying homeowners. That allowed PERF to complete processing many pending requests, since all PERF grants are based on the amount of loss remaining after an employee receives insurance checks, state or federal grants, and other relief payments.

"We couldn't finalize action until 'Road Home' was done," Von Bergen said.

The fund received 1,696 applications for assistance for the Gulf Coast hurricanes in 2005. To date, grants have been approved for 977 postal employees, totaling \$6,583,000.

Of the remaining applications, 314 were disapproved for various reasons or withdrawn, and the fund is contacting 405 other claimants seeking additional information.

Of the 977 grants, 205 were for the maximum of \$14,000; 297 were for \$8,000; 242 for \$4,000; 136 for \$2,000, and 97 for the minimum grant of \$1,000.

The vast majority of grants went to active and retired craft employees



Andrea Booher/FEMA

represented by the NALC and the American Postal Workers Union.

While the Gulf Coast hurricanes generated most of PERF's activity over the past two years, the fund also was busy with applications from other areas of the country. In 2007, 64 grants totaling \$454,000 were issued for hurricanes, floods, tornados and fires in 24 states.

To date this year, 102 grants totaling \$651,000 have gone to employees in 33 states—Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

The flood of applications doesn't stop. As this *Postal Record* went to press, applications were being received from postal employees who were victims of the Midwest flooding, Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, and Tropical Storm Fay. And FEMA in early October issued

“major disaster” declarations for parts of Puerto Rico, Illinois and New Hampshire.

PERF, like all charitable organizations, is feeling the pinch of the severe economic downturn, with both the number and amount of donations shrinking. That increases the need for generous payroll deduction pledges from active letter carriers to CFC #10268 during the federal campaign and also donations from retired carriers and other postal employees. Donations are tax deductible.

Additional information about the Postal Employees' Relief Fund, as well as information on applying for grants and how to make donations, is available on the Fund's website, www.postalrelief.com. NALC members may contact Drew Von Bergen, NALC's representative on the Executive Committee, at NALC Headquarters—phone 202-662-2489 or e-mail vonbergen@nalc.org. ✉



Top: Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, homes flooded by storms in September 2008. Above: Hurricane Ike's path toward Texas.