



Natural disasters highlight need for PERF donations

Photo by Jeremy Lock

A single disastrous week this summer brought tragedy and hardship to people across the nation—and some new reasons for us to remember fellow postal workers who find themselves in the path of disaster.

In the last week of June, a wildfire in Colorado leaped rapidly from a wooded area into Colorado Springs, sending many homes up in flames. The fire consumed 18,000 acres and 350 homes before it was contained. At least two people died, and the damage to homes totaled \$110 million.

“We did have a member who lost her home in the fire,” said Colorado Springs Branch 204 President Kevin Corcoran. “She had just closed on the house June 1.” Corcoran said the letter carrier is seeking help from PERF.

While the fire burned in Colorado, Tropical Storm Debby made landfall on Florida’s Gulf Coast. While wind damage was relatively light, the slow-moving storm drenched the Sunshine State with record rainfalls, flooding homes, businesses and streets. Some areas reported two feet of rain. Seven deaths were blamed on the storm.

On Friday, June 29, millions of people on the East Coast experienced a weather phenomenon new to many—a “derecho,” a large, fast-moving thunderstorm with very high wind speeds that some meteorologists compare to a hurricane that

forms on land. In the span of just 10 hours, the storm swept from Indiana to Maryland, killing dozens of people and damaging homes with wind or falling trees in a path 700 miles long and up to 300 miles wide. Nearly 5 million people were left without electricity for up to a week. With power out and air conditioners silent, 30 more deaths were reported in the heat wave that followed the storm. Some power company workers making line repairs also lost their lives.

When postal workers get caught up in natural disasters like these, they can get help from the Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF).

PERF provides assistance to postal employees who are victims of natural disasters or fires. PERF provides grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$14,000, depending on the total amount of qualified loss after insurance and other relief assistance, to both craft workers and managers. Since 1990, PERF has provided nearly \$15 million to more than 3,000 postal employees affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires and home fires.

“PERF is one way we help our postal family,” said NALC President Fredric Rolando. “When someone is in desperate need, the rest of us are there to assist. Just as letter carriers keep an eye on our patrons and step in to help when they have emergencies, we help each other.”

A firefighter keeps a watchful eye on a fire on the next ridge as his crew cuts a fire line, working to contain part of the Colorado wildfire.

Along with the NALC, the participants in PERF are the postmaster general, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, the National Association of Postal Supervisors, the National League of Postmasters of the United States and the National Association of Postmasters of the United States.

With the latest disasters reminding us that fires and storms can strike any part of the country without warning, now is a good time to support PERF.

“When you give to PERF, you know that someday your donation will be a lifeline for a fellow postal worker in dire straits,” Rolando said. “PERF gets postal workers and their families back on their feet.”

The easiest way to give to PERF is through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC number for PERF is 10268. You can also mail a check to PERF at P.O. Box 7630, Woodbridge, VA 22195, or donate by credit card online at its website, postalrelief.org.

If you need help from PERF, visit its website for eligibility and application information, call 202-408-1869 or send an e-mail to perf10268@aol.com. ✉