

What Services Are Available to USCIS Customers Affected by Hurricane Katrina?



Many different programs offer disaster assistance to immigrants and other qualified aliens including food, rental and mortgage assistance, temporary housing allowances, grants for repairs, short-term cash, small business loans and more.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides:

- Temporary housing assistance, or rental payments for persons displaced due to Hurricane Katrina.
- Limited assistance for repair or replacement for homeowners so that they may restore habitability of their homes.

Look for FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers in affected areas.

The Other Needs Assistance (ONA) provides:

- Money for repairs, replacement of household items, job essentials, medical, dental and funeral costs in the form of grants to those affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- Money for purposes other than medical, dental and funeral for those persons affected by Katrina and not eligible for SBA loans, or for those persons who received an inadequate SBA loan.

ONA is administered through Offices of Emergency Services or similar state agencies.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) provides:

- Cash to replace income for those who are unemployed due to Hurricane Katrina.

DUA is administered through the Department of Labor through state employment agencies.

Food Programs provide:

Emergency food stamps and food are provided to meet emergency needs.

Food Programs are administered through state social services agencies and similar local organizations as a service provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Small Business Administration (SBA) provides:

Low interest loans for repairs to homeowners and renters as well as to large and small business owners.

www.uscis.gov ★ 1 800 375 5283



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Which immigrants qualify for these programs?

Many “qualified aliens” can apply for most or all of the benefits described on the previous page. They include the following groups:

- Lawful permanent residents
- Refugees, asylees and certain parolees
- Cuban/Haitian entrants
- Battered spouses and children pursuing immigration benefits based on that status.

Undocumented and non-immigrant workers in the US are eligible for non-cash, in kind emergency disaster relief such as food and shelter, search and rescue and emergency medical care.

If I accept emergency assistance, am I at risk of being considered a “public charge?”

No. Accepting assistance will not have a negative consequence on your immigration status unless you fraudulently obtain such assistance.

Can employers hire an individual who has no personal documents for I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification?

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced on September 6, 2005 that it will refrain from initiating employer sanction actions for the next for 45 days for civil violations of I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification procedures, with regard to individuals who are currently unable to provide identity and eligibility documents as a result of the hurricane. U.S. employers are responsible for completing and retaining Employment Eligibility (I-9) Forms for hired individuals. Regulations require employers to verify employment eligibility and establish identity through original documents presented by employees.

Due to the losses caused by Hurricane Katrina, many individuals have lost or will be unable to provide the documents required by this procedure. Also, many government agencies in the affected regions have suffered destruction or damage so that many individuals are unable to apply for and receive replacement documents.

DHS will not bring sanction actions against employers for the next 45 days so that employers can hire individuals evacuated or displaced from affected areas, otherwise eligible for employment, but lacking personal documents. DHS will review this policy at the end of 45 days.

Note that employers are still required to complete I-9 forms for new employees as much as possible but will not be penalized if documentation is not available as a result of the hurricane.

What will happen with all petitions and cases pending at the USCIS, DOL, and EOIR offices in New Orleans?

All offices in New Orleans are currently closed. As of September 9, 2005, USCIS has reported that all files in New Orleans are intact and are being moved to Memphis the week of September 18th, but it will likely be some weeks before they are organized and accessible. In the meantime, the New Orleans operations office is located in the Memphis, Tennessee Sub-Office and all other USCIS offices will be assisting in providing services and benefits to those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

No filings can be made at Immigration Court in New Orleans and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has suspended work on cases that originated from New Orleans. At this time, the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) is working on a uniform policy for filings for the regional offices in affected areas and is considering issues such as aging of petitions, filings, deadlines, reconstruction of files and more as they come up.

The Department of State (DOS) will give priority appointments to Family and Next of Kin of hurricane victims. All DOS posts will give humanitarian consideration to applicants and accommodate emergency cases as quickly as possible. This special consideration will be limited to family and next of kin. DOS officers will refer applicants looking for loved ones to the website compiled by FEMA at www.dhs.gov. When using this web page, click on “Finding Friends and Information.”

How can affected USCIS customers replace lost immigration documents?

All USCIS offices will assist those affected by Katrina in replacing immigration documents. The USCIS offices will verify identity and immigration status through electronic file data before re-issuing immigration related documents.

Normally, you would need to make an appointment at a local office for these services. If you have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina, you do NOT need to make an INFOPASS appointment to visit the local office in your area for these services.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Permanent Resident Card

You will need to get a Form I-90. The Form I-90 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Permanent Resident Card has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-90 application in-person at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself

as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please take two passport-style photos with you as well so we can give you temporary proof of your permanent resident status. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Re-Entry Permit

You will need to get a Form I-131. The Form I-131 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Re-Entry Permit has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-131 application in-person at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please follow the instructions to the Form I-131 concerning supporting documentation and photos and bring them with you if you choose to file in-person. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Refugee Travel Document

You will need to get a Form I-131. The Form I-131 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Refugee Travel Document has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-131 application in-person at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please follow the instructions to the Form I-131 concerning supporting documentation and photos and bring them with you if you choose to file in-person. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Advance Parole

You will need to get a Form I-131. The Form I-131 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Advance Parole Document has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-131 application in-person at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please follow the instructions to the Form I-131 concerning supporting documentation and photos and bring them with you if you choose to file in-person. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Employment Authorization Document

You will need to get a Form I-765. The Form I-765 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-765 application in-person at any local office. Where possible, please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Lost/Destroyed Naturalization Certificate or Certificate of Citizenship

You will need to get a Form N-565. The Form N-565 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced, and your Naturalization Certificate or Certificate of Citizenship has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form N-565 application in-person at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please follow the instructions to the Form N-565 concerning supporting documentation and photos and bring them with you if you choose to file in-person. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Replacing Your Form I-94, Nonimmigrant Entry Document

You will need to get a Form I-102. The Form I-102 is available from our website. We will also have a supply on-hand at our local offices. If you have been displaced and your Form I-94 has been lost or destroyed, you can file the Form I-102 at any local office. Please take any documents and/or identification that you may have with you to help speed the process. Please identify yourself as having been displaced due to the hurricane. Where possible, please follow the instructions to the Form I-102 concerning supporting documentation and photos and bring them with you if you choose to file in-person. Fee waivers will be decided on a case-by-case basis. See *Fee Waivers* at the bottom of the page.

Fee Waivers

Many Katrina victims may not have additional documents for fee waiver applications. USCIS can approve fee waivers for those who show an inability to pay based on an affidavit or unsworn declaration.

Filing Other Applications

If you need to file an application or petition for anything other than a replacement document shown previously, please follow the instructions for that specific form. Forms and instructions are available on our website.

What should J-1 exchange visitors do if their programs have been disrupted by the hurricane?

The DOS advises all J-1 exchange visitors to contact their program sponsors. We do not expect J-1 visa holders will be penalized for the disruption, but have not received further information yet.

What should F-1 or M Foreign Students do if they are currently studying at a school affected by the disaster?

Foreign students should attempt to contact the designated school official (DSO) if available. If the DSO is not available, please contact the SEVIS office at 202-305-2346 or email SEVIS.source@dhs.gov and include date of birth, SEVIS ID# and school information. Foreign students should let the SEVIS officer know if they plan to delay entry until the school is operational, or transfer to another educational institution. New “F” or “M” students who were unable to contact their designated school will receive a new report date and new I-20 if the school is operational. Students who transfer to a new school should contact the school directly for the new I-20. This particular transfer will not be subject to a new SEVIS fee. Still, students may need to obtain a new visa that indicates the new school. Students will also not have to pay a new MRV fee.

SEVIS has detailed information on its website at www.ice.gov/SEVIS concerning the following issues:

- Transfers
- Transcripts
- Status concerns
- Residence and money problems
- Lost documentation
- Address changes
- OPT issues
- Fall enrollment problems
- Contact information

How will the Immigration Court in New Orleans be Affected?

The court is closed until further notice. We have been informed that no action will be taken on any case arising

out of hurricane-affected areas until proper procedures are set up.

Have naturalization services been cancelled for USCIS customers from the New Orleans district?

Yes, naturalization services in the affected areas have been cancelled until further notice. Those who have pending naturalization and adjustment of status interviews will be contacted as soon as information becomes available.

What happened to passport applications processed through the New Orleans Passport office?

The DOS announced on September 7, 2005 that all materials in the New Orleans Passport Agency have been collected and transported to another location. These materials include personal documents and applications from individuals applying for passports.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs is in the process of mailing postcards to applicants notifying them of the disruptions and possible delays caused by Hurricane Katrina. Anyone with pending passport applications at the New Orleans Passport Office planning to travel in the next six weeks should contact the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778.

What if the hurricane causes me to be late in meeting a filing deadline or miss an interview?

USCIS will attempt to accommodate customers to the fullest extent possible. If you were scheduled for an interview at the New Orleans Office, please call customer service at 1-800-375-5283 once you have an address you can use for more than 30 days so we can work with you to re-schedule your interview at another office, where appropriate.

Do I need to file an AR-11 form if I have been displaced?

All immigrants and non-immigrants are required to submit an AR-11 form each time they move to a new location. Once you have an address that you can use for more than 30 days, please complete the Form AR-11. If you have any cases pending with USCIS, also call customer service at 1-800-375-5283 to update your address on your case.

Photos by FEMA.