# Talking Points

News Release: “Comfort” Dogs to Visit Hurricane Katrina Survivors Over the Holidays

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Dec. 12, 2005

* HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response is a national nonprofit organization whose members include certified therapy dogs and handlers that have been trained to provide emotional support to people affected by a crisis or disaster.
* HOPE is deploying 12 dog/handler teams to Louisiana to provide comfort to Hurricane Katrina survivors over the holidays. These teams will visit with individuals in Disaster Recovery Centers, attend holiday events for Katrina survivors, and support the mental health and recovery efforts of other voluntary agencies.
* FEMA requested that HOPE provide aid to Katrina survivors.
* The holidays are especially hard for those who are still coping with their losses from Hurricane Katrina. HOPE’s crisis therapy dogs will create a special bridge to those who are in isolation or who have shut down to human contact as a result of this trauma.
* The 12 dog/handler teams deploying to Louisiana are part of HOPE’s Eastern Region. These teams are based primarily in the Richmond and northern Virginia area, with an additional team coming from New York. These teams typically provide emotional support to victims of crisis throughout Virginia and in neighboring states.
* Research has shown that people benefit from interacting with animals following a crisis. Using animals to help people cope with a disaster is another resource for the emotional rescue and recovery of people in trauma.
* Nationally, HOPE has a total of nearly 150 all-volunteer teams covering the US.
* The best way to support HOPE is through a financial contribution. Your donation will help to reduce travel costs for crisis response dog teams and allow us to provide further support for our members to perform our mission. Visit [www.HOPEaaacr.org](http://www.hopecrisisresponse.org) for more information about HOPE and to find out how you can support our mission. If you would prefer to give a donation to aid the teams deploying to Louisiana, please designate “HOPE Eastern Region” on your check.