

Area American Red Cross Volunteers Staged For Hurricane Laura Aftermath, Contacts On Ground Invited To Provide Info

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ST. LOUIS - Right now, the country is battling multiple natural disasters and one is about to strike the Louisiana/Texas Gulf Coast area with Hurricane Laura. Hurricane Laura is now projected to reach landfall at the Texas-Louisiana border Thursday morning.

The rapid intensification of Laura has shocked scientists and forecasters have said there will be what is described as “an unbelievable storm surge” and could penetrate as far as 30 miles inland from the coastline. Climate scientist Eric Holthaus said today: “Laura now poses a catastrophic, potentially historic threat to coastal Louisiana.”

Braced in the middle of this huge storm threat are several volunteers from the St. Louis region. The American Red Cross of Missouri and Arkansas have deployed 16 volunteers to the region. The St. Louis Red Cross chapter represents Madison County and fringe to St. Louis cities.

“In anticipation of the devastation that may result from these two storms, we have sent several volunteers from Missouri and Arkansas to help along the Gulf Coast and we anticipate more will be needed,” said Chris Harmon, Regional Disaster Officer for American Red Cross of Missouri-Arkansas. “COVID-19 has affected the number of our current volunteers who are available to deploy, so we are asking healthy individuals who can deploy up to 14 days to consider joining us as a temporary disaster volunteer.”

One husband-wife team from the St. Louis has volunteered for the Red Cross assignment with 16 total from the region staged in hotels.

Sharon Watson, a spokesperson for the St. Louis American Red Cross, said the volunteers are in a position to help once the storm strikes.

“They (the American Red Cross) stage them and keep everybody safe until things hit,” she said. “They don’t want the volunteers to be impacted or they won’t be able to help once the storm hits, then they move where they are needed.”

Watson said the American Red Cross does need volunteers with the wildfires in California and now this potential national disaster in Louisiana and Texas. She said there are predictions for more hurricanes this season, which makes it even more necessary to have extra volunteers.

“We are having a hard time recruiting folks because of COVID and many of our normal volunteers are in high health risk categories,” she said. “They are expecting a lot of damaging winds and flash floods in Louisiana. We absolutely could use other volunteers.”

Watson said she is so proud of those who volunteer their time to work natural disasters with the Red Cross.

“We are so grateful to have volunteers who are still willing to help even in difficult times like these with the COVID-19 Pandemic,” she said.

In Disaster Health Services, volunteers with health care backgrounds are needed in shelters to help assess individuals’ health and provide hands-on care in alignment with professional licensures (RN, LPN, LVN, APRN, NP, EMT, paramedic, MD/DO or PA). Specifically, volunteers are needed who can provide care as delegated by a licensed nurse in shelters; this could include assisting with activities of daily living, personal assistance services, providing health education and helping to replace medications, durable medical equipment or consumable medical supplies.

To volunteer, please go to redcross.org/volunteertoday.

NOTE: Riverbender.com/Edglentoday.com is actively attempting to contact some of the area volunteers who will be in the Louisiana/Texas region that will be hit with the hurricane and potential high winds and flash flooding. If you have a family member or friend in the region who would wish to send photos and allow interviews, please send their phone and e-mail information to news@riverbender.com or text [\(618\) 623-5930](tel:6186235930).