



Written by Shantelle Oliver  
Senior Dispatcher  
Irving, TX

Three of my coworkers and myself headed to Seabrook, TX not really knowing what to expect. The only thing we knew was we were going to assist in whatever capacity we were needed. We arrived around 12:38 am expecting to sleep in the van we drove packed with items we were anxious to donate. It took us three days to convince Seabrook officers to take the items. We were expecting to sleep in the van for the duration of our visit but were surprised when Alice, a police lieutenant told us we were being housed in the Volunteer Fire House. This place had a full size kitchen, three rooms with four bunk beds, and most importantly a shower. These were all luxuries we did not expect.

When we arrived that night, we were given a tour of our work area by one of the dispatchers from Harris County Sheriff's Office. Harris County was the reason Seabrook's phone and dispatching abilities were possible. There were two mobile command vehicles that provided an area for Seabrook dispatchers to dispatch their officers, answer emergency/non-emergency calls from their citizens, as well as dispatch Fire/EMS. The main trailer was where Harris County dispatchers answered the initial 9-1-1 calls and transferred to the Seabrook or other agencies in the area. Our job was to fill in for Seabrook dispatchers so they could have a few days off after working long hours without days off. We worked 12 hour shifts, two of us on days and the other two on the night shift. Everyone was very nice. Despite losing most valued possessions, everyone was upbeat, cracking jokes, and happy that we were there. A picture would not be enough to describe the devastation in that city. To hear the stories of everyone affected was very heartbreaking. We left Seabrook with new friends, new experiences, and the experience of how to handle crisis situations during and after a natural disaster. This alone is a rewarding job and I'm extremely grateful to be a part of it and the things that come with it.

After being back at home for a few days it turns out that Stephanie and myself were being deployed again. She ended up going back to Seabrook and another coworker and myself went to Bridge City, TX. I knew this was going to be a different type of devastation when I saw all of the dead alligators along the highway as we got closer to town. We arrived in Bridge City around 2:00 pm and relieved the Denton dispatcher around 4:00 pm after being given a tour of the facilities. We had a place to eat, sleep, and take a shower. Like Seabrook, the people were extremely nice and grateful that we were there. We worked 12 hour shifts answering the phone lines and dispatching. One of the dispatchers that lived in the city lost everything. We were given a tour of the devastation. During that outing one of the residents located a four foot long alligator on his property. By the time the animal control officer got there, the resident had the alligator detained. The alligator was gotten and set free in a bayou. The tour of the city was very sad but very humbling. There so many things in life we all take for granted. Out of 3,500 houses in the city, only 14 of them were spared from water damage. So to drive through the neighborhoods and see all of those people lifelong possessions strewn out on the street it was quite sad. The residents of Bridge City will have to start their life from scratch. Throughout this bad experience everyone remained positive and upbeat. I am so glad I was able to assist in this manner. This is an experience that I will hold near and dear to my heart for many years to come.

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