

More TERT Deployment Experiences

Our thanks to Kendall Dickerman and Stephanie Barnes, Irving PD, for sharing their experiences in the following article and photos.



Four dispatchers from our agency, Irving PD, were deployed to Seabrook, Texas to assist Seabrook PD dispatch. We drove down together in a van so loaded with supplies to help anyone who needed it, that there was barely room for us. Once we arrived and saw how badly the area had been damaged, we were amazed that everyone was in such good spirits. In true dispatcher spirit, they had persevered.

We worked side by side with the dispatchers and became fast friends. Funny how disaster can bring out the best in people. They were so happy that someone had come to help them, and we were quickly treated as if we had known them our whole lives.

The Seabrook dispatchers told us about the night the storm hit, how they worked through the night even as water filled their police department. How they stayed and worked 24 hour shifts, taking turns sleeping in shifts in the fire station. Most employees had not even been home to see if they had damage of their own; they stayed and worked for four straight days. No power and no running water.

Seabrook, like many other agencies were now working from a command trailer in the back parking lot of what used to be their police department, and using port-a-potties that had been set up on the far side of the same lot. They had folding bag chairs set up outside as a make-shift break area to try and take a few precious minutes away when they could.

Harris County S.O. provided the command trailers and a skeleton crew to help out. Harris County dispatchers have been there since four days after the storm hit and will be there until the Seabrook Police Department re-opens, possibly in December.

Some school children in our area made cards for the emergency personnel on the coast. Probably the most wonderful thing about the trip was that we got to deliver those cards. We left them on a small table in the trailer and for days we watched dispatchers, officers and fire fighters read the cards. They were surprised that there were so many, laughing and crying at the content. Sometimes the smallest gesture makes the largest impact.

Volunteering to help out for a few days was nothing compared to what they had been through. The emergency personnel pulled together, whether it was police, fire or EMS and made the best of a bad situation. Our fellow dispatchers, and now dear friends, survived what many would have run away from.

The true heroes are the ones that stayed to work during the storm, and still work every day.

