



PAHRA DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

PAHRA has taken a multi-pronged approach in providing disaster relief for victims of the recent hurricanes. Please read on to learn more about our efforts and what you can do to assist.

- 1) PAHRA has made a **\$10,000** donation towards relief efforts through the American Red Cross, the preeminent organization providing shelter, food, emergency support, care and comfort for those affected by such natural disasters. The PAHRA Board of Directors notes that they appreciate the fact that the Red Cross is there not just immediately following these disasters, but that their efforts continue through the challenging times that follow long after the storms have passed.
- 2) PAHRA President Senghor Manns has delegated Harrisburg Housing Authority Vice-President Fred Banuelos to create a **Disaster Relief Task Force**. The Task Force is charged with exploring ways in which PAHRA members can work together to help disaster victims obtain temporary or permanent housing.

Because areas of Pennsylvania have strong existing Puerto Rican communities, it is anticipated that there may be an influx of victims – especially from Maria – seeking shelter with or near family and friends here. President Manns states, “In order to assist these families expeditiously and legally, housing authorities will be better prepared and impactful if they collaborate and cooperate with each other.” If you are interested in participating with the Task Force, please contact Mr. Banuelos at fredb@harrisburghousing.org.

- 3) PAHRA has dedicated an area of our website to highlighting disaster relief efforts. Simply log on to www.pahra.org, click on the **Resources** category, then select the **Disaster Relief** tab. Here we will be posting news on our efforts to streamline and organize processes to assist disaster victims in their relocation efforts, along with the latest guidance from HUD, and more. This area will be updated often as information becomes available.
- 4) PAHRA is partnering with Affordable Housing Online, operated by ApartmentSmart.com, to establish a **Disaster Housing Assistance** search portal, where victims can easily identify areas in which affordable housing, including public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers, are currently available. This will enable the victims or their social workers to expedite the process of locating shelter, helping to eliminate the long and laborious task of contacting numerous housing providers only to find that nothing is available.

Soon, our member PHAs will receive a survey to complete. It will not take much time since it involves a collection of information that is readily available. The survey is designed to accumulate data that will be entered into an easily accessible platform, which will provide a database of available housing or housing assistance for the disaster victims. 1.2 million low-income renters use Affordable Housing Online each month to help them locate housing. Working with Affordable Housing Online, PAHRA is at the forefront of this type of relief effort. We are hopeful that once established, other PHAs nationwide will join in this effort that can greatly assist relocating victims of not just hurricanes, but also flooding, wildfires, and other natural disasters.