

Hurricane Florence Will Provide Opportunities for Volunteer Pilots and Their Groups to Help Those in Need

Following the 2017 disastrous storms many groups organized volunteer pilots to provide relief flights, supplementing the work of the military, FEMA, state and local agencies, and tens of thousands of ground based first responders.

You or other volunteers with your Public Benefit Flying organization may already be getting prepared to help those affected by the damage and flooding caused by Hurricane Florence (and others that may follow). Or as the storm begins to reach its end you may be thinking of doing so.

That is a great idea! You should consider what you and the other volunteers with your group can do to help. The sooner you get organized and make the appropriate contacts the more effective your response will be.

Individual pilots and owners should work with established groups. They have the procedures and staffs to make contact with agencies involved in relief work and to provide appropriate assignments to new volunteers.

Be aware that airports and other landing areas may become submerged or damaged. Find out if your proposed destination will be safe. Observe all Temporary Flight Restrictions and if you need to fly into one be sure to get the appropriate authorizations. Double check all your planning and do not rush into affected areas or situations. You do NOT want to become part of the disaster! We will provide below a checklist of important safety protocols.

Because of the calls for boats and for vehicles that can operate in flood waters as well as to offshore locations there may even be opportunities for seaplane pilots to help, although because of storm related winds and clouds, turbid waters, large amounts of debris, and hidden submerged objects such as signposts one must make sure that bodies of water are safe for landing, with the determination made by those familiar with seaplane operations. Be sure to have communications with those at the landing areas. Know before you go!

In addition few groups have seaplane pilots and owners enrolled in their programs, so each group will need to determine if and how to enroll and provide orientation rides to new members at the same time as their regular pilots are keeping the staff busy with land based relief operations. They may ask new members to help with nonflying work, or right seat help, until they can perform their normal enrollment processes. This kind of help is just as

critical as flying!

Volunteers practice loading injured people on to a waiting seaplane during an emergency exercise at Kala Point, Washington, 8-9-2017.

Cydney McFarland - Peninsula Daily News



Please consider how you and your group may be most effective in helping all those in need in Texas and Louisiana and surrounding areas, by flying in relief personnel and supplies, and transporting out those needing relocation - including animals.

Learn how more than twenty volunteer pilot groups helped out following last year's hurricanes! All the groups who responded last year were collectively awarded the ACA-NAA National Public Benefit Flying Award for Teamwork. Read about their award and the contributions of the volunteers at [this link](#).

And read on for some essential safety guidelines and other sources of information, and be sure to let ACA / EVAC know about your activities. We are constantly asked by the media what is happening and we need to steer the aviation and national media, reporters, and TV crews to you to make further inquiry. Keep us informed by emailing us at mail@aircareall.org

Some Safety Recommendations for Volunteer Pilots and Public Benefit Flying Groups in Helping After Disasters

FLY SAFELY WHEN FLYING TO HELP OTHERS!

Air Care Alliance Member Group Patient Airlift Services (PALS) and their partner Sky Hope Network have developed some basic guidelines for volunteer pilots wishing to fly in support of relief efforts following the recent and current hurricanes - and any other disasters or major emergencies.

In addition to these recommendations below, ACA also recommends that prior to making flights any pilots should take the AOPA Flight Safety Institute's short online interactive tutorial called "**Public Benefit Flying: Balancing Safety and Compassion.**" It is available on AOPA's Online Learning page <https://www.aopa.org/training-and-safety/online-learning> and if you are not an AOPA member simply register for web access when asked.

- **Coordinate all flights with a disaster relief flight charity** - Airspace and Airports are often congested after a disaster. In addition, information changes by the hour. Coordinating with a disaster relief flight charity can insure that resources are being maximized in an effort to save lives and help people. Sky Hope and other groups work with NBAA, AOPA, ACA and many other groups and government agencies to make sure they are providing the most up-to-date information to their pilots. Additionally, they often combine needs on the same flight, maximizing the capability of our aircraft.
- **Operate with two pilots** - The details surrounding a disaster relief flight can be challenging. Operate with two pilots to manage the workload.
- **Stay on top of NOTAMS and TFRs** by checking them regularly, and again prior to departure, for every flight. They can be enforced at any time.
- **Experience is very important during disaster.** The abnormal conditions during relief efforts call for experienced pilots who are instrument rated and current.
- **Operate aircraft with traffic avoidance systems** - Radar and flight following may or may not be available in the disaster area. In addition, flight operations will likely be in very high volume including private and government aircraft. Additionally, helicopters are often operating in disaster areas causing additional air traffic.
- **Do not depend on fuel in disaster areas** - Often fuel supplies have not been replenished or are in short supply. If fuel is available, there may be long waits to receive it or cash may be required to pay.
- **Prepare for potential mechanical problems ahead of time** - Resources to help fix flat tires or fix aircraft discrepancies will likely not be available. Consider adding a few spare tires and other items that may be needed for any common mechanical issues. You do not want to get stuck in the disaster area due to an aircraft mechanical.
- **Do not load and drop supplies without checking in with a relief flight charity** - Dropping supplies on the ramp of a disaster area airport complicates the relief effort and can hinder ground operations. Please coordinate with the relief flight charities for any supply or volunteer needs. If you are flying supplies for a charity flight organization, use proper weighing equipment and prepare manifests.
- **Avoid unnecessary flights** - If you are flying for curiosity sake, don't. There are many needs trying to be met after a disaster and adding another aircraft operation can use valuable time and resources needed for other flights.

- **Prepare for uncertain ground circumstances** - Disaster areas are constantly changing. You may arrive at an airport under military control. You may have to deal with security issues on the ground. There may be evacuees at the airport asking for transportation. Be prepared.
- **Recognizing the end of a mission**- One of the most important things a community can do after a disaster is to resume normal economic operations. An abundance of donated supplies or donated flights can cause disruptions to normal local commerce.

Our thanks to PALS and Sky Hope for compiling this information! Note that PALS is inviting groups, pilots, and others to inquire about involvement with their group by emailing RELIEF@PALServices.org

Sources of additional information and guidance:

During the first gathering of the Air Care Alliance in 1990 and in subsequent AIR CARE meetings EVAC, the Emergency Volunteer Air Corps, has provided seminars and workshops on general aviation participation in emergency and disaster relief efforts.

EVAC continues to provide emergency and disaster relief information to ACA and the groups, and has also gathered useful information and links on their Relief Information Page at <http://www.evac.org/relief-info.htm>

FEMA has a useful page with links to various sources of information at: https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-harvey?utm_source=hp_promo&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=disaster

Otherwise keep in touch with the groups in your area to find out what they and their pilots may be doing in responding to the need for help following Hurricane Florence (and others).

To find groups, you can use our Air Care Alliance automated "Request a Flight or Info" system. Click on <http://www.aircarealliance.org/submit-request-for-assistance> and follow the instructions.

You may also browse through our complete list of groups at this link: <http://www.aircarealliance.org/directory-groups>

Thank you!

We at ACA thoroughly appreciate all the work you and the other volunteers and supporters of public benefit flying groups are doing in order to help those in need and to serve out communities.

Remember - please keep us informed by emailing us at mail@aircareall.org

Rol Murrow

President, Air Care Alliance
President, EVAC - Emergency Volunteer Air Corps
www.aircarealliance.org
www.evac.org
rol.murrow@evac.org
Cell: 505-362-8232
Fax: 815-572-9192

***"Pilots and Their Groups,
Flying to Help Others and
Serve Our Communities"***
