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CBP Announces Mass Migration Plans for Hurricane Ike

09/11/2008

Rio Grande Valley, Texas – U.S. Customs and Border Protection is currently maintaining normal border security operations at and between our ports of entry in the potential impacted area of the border.

Chief Ron Vitiello, Rio Grande Sector Chief Patrol Agent, is CBP's lead field coordinator during Hurricane Ike. We are actively maintaining liaison officers at local, state and FEMA command and coordination centers in order to most effectively commit our resources to those agencies and individuals in need. We have approximately 6,200 employees who are living in the potential impacted area and who continue to work toward keeping our country safe.

We have either forward deployed or put on alert some of our specialty units, Border Patrol Search, Trauma and Rescue and Border Patrol Tactical Unit and have additional frontline personnel and equipment from outside the impacted area on standby to deploy should the need become necessary for us to maintain normal operations or assist in the recovery effort.

CBP enforcement responsibilities will not impede a safe, speedy and officially ordered evacuation. Saving lives is always the paramount responsibility of this department and the same is true at the border.

Our agents and officers are available to help anyone, regardless of citizenship or nationality. Further, our enforcement operations will not impede the evacuation and sheltering of residents during an officially ordered evacuation.

U.S. laws will not be suspended, but CBP's priority will be assisting local officials as they carry out a safe and speedy evacuation of people leaving the impacted area.

Should circumstances warrant, CBP field leaders have the authority to implement alternative measures, dependent on circumstances, to reduce the processing time for individuals seeking entry into the U.S. or passing through Border Patrol checkpoints.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

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