



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Citizen Voice's SAFELY OUT™ Project Marks Somber Second Anniversary While Watching Hurricane Gustav Churn Toward the Gulf Coast** *SAFELY OUT™ Pilot Project Marked Its Second Anniversary on Third Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina*

(August 30, 2008 – Sacramento, CA) – As Hurricane Gustav began a collision course with the U.S. Gulf Coast on August 29, people in Louisiana were recognizing the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. [Citizen Voice's SAFELY OUT™ Project](#), an evacuation kit designed to help safely evacuate the vulnerable during both natural and man-made disasters, also reached a milestone of two years since its launch on August 29.

Citizen Voice's SAFELY OUT™ Project was born out of an idea that came to co-founder Gary Dietrich when he was working as both a broadcaster and Red Cross volunteer in the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina and in preparation for Hurricane Rita. The SAFELY OUT™ Project is designed as a neighbor helping neighbor evacuation effort, assisting vulnerable populations in reaching safety and relieving the burden that emergency responders and caregivers often shoulder alone. It was launched on the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in 2006. The key transformational idea behind the project is that citizens themselves need to be "first responders."

Hurricane Gustav is expected to grow to a Category 3 Hurricane as it reaches the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. According to [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com), projections currently show the storm's well-defined eye is potentially headed just west of New Orleans leaving the most dangerous northeast quadrant on a path toward New Orleans.

People have already been leaving the area in droves. According to an [August 30 Associated Press \(AP\) report](#), "Mayor Ray Nagin's spokeswoman said buses and trains would begin Saturday taking the city's estimated 30,000 residents who are disabled, elderly or need help leaving the area to shelters in central and northern Louisiana, as well as out of the state."

"The city had yet to call for a mandatory evacuation, but began ushering out the sick, elderly and those without their own transportation on Saturday. The state has a \$7 million contract for more than 700 buses to carry an estimated 30,000 people to shelters."

"Police and firefighters were set to go street-to-street with bullhorns over the weekend to help people direct people where to go. Unlike Hurricane Katrina, there will be no shelter of last resort in the Superdome. The doors there will be locked. Those among New Orleans' estimated 310,000 to 340,000 residents who ignore orders to leave accept "all responsibility for themselves and their loved ones," the city's emergency preparedness director, Jerry Sneed, has warned."

Methods of clearing neighborhoods still don't seem to have changed substantially despite the hard lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Citizen Voice's SAFELY OUT™ Project would be a tremendous help to emergency personnel in this situation.

Already embraced by the [California Governor's Office of Homeland Security](#) with a contribution of \$100,000, Director Matt Bettenhausen stated that, "We see tremendous value in how the SAFELY OUT™ Kits can help streamline emergency responders' responsibilities in disasters enabling them to allocate resources to those who

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need them most. This approach relieves the burden that emergency responder so often shoulder alone of checking every home to verify that residents are out safely.”

Local law enforcement in the pilot project region like former Chief Joe Cherry of the Sacramento City Fire Department and [Sacramento County Sheriff](#), John McGinniss have endorsed the SAFELY OUT Project for its simplicity and ability to streamline evacuation efforts for their staff.

So far, over half a million dollars in funding has been secured for the national pilot project to distribute tens of thousands of SAFELY OUT Kits, especially targeting the vulnerable, in the greater Sacramento region. It is believed to be the first strategic approach in the U.S. targeting our most vulnerable during disasters that involves the entire community in the evacuation effort. SAFELY OUT has already met its initial goal of distributing 10,000 SAFELY OUT Kits and the next 15,000 are currently being distributed. Yet another 10,000 are in production and expected to be distributed by the end of 2008. SAFELY OUT’s pilot phase will be completed upon distribution of 100,000 kits, when the project will expand its reach throughout California and then nationwide. Due to extensive media coverage of the precedent-setting effort, inquiries and individual SAFELY OUT™ Kit orders have already come from as far away as Chicago, Seattle and Hawaii.

Gary Dietrich, a Sacramento broadcast political analyst and president of Citizen Voice, developed the idea for SAFELY OUT™ after broadcasting from and volunteering during the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort and the Hurricane Rita evacuation effort in 2005. As a broadcaster and evacuation volunteer in the hurricane zone, “I saw how desperate people were and the danger facing the vulnerable who couldn’t get themselves out of harm’s way,” explained Dietrich. Dietrich had already assisted California’s Office of Emergency Services extensively and thus had a sound idea coming back from the Gulf of what might help transform the public’s role in disaster evacuations.

“Summer’s heat and fire threats will soon give way to the rains of fall and winter,” stated Jerry Colivas, former Manager of Emergency Services and Homeland Security for the City of Sacramento and SAFELY OUT advisory board member. “We need to be vigilant about protecting our families throughout the year. SAFELY OUT is a simple solution that helps solve the very complex problem of evacuation, as we witnessed after Hurricane Katrina.”

According to a timely report by [BusinessWeek on August 13, 2007](#), “an estimated 500,000 people are now in danger of flooding in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River basin.” Additionally, “A 200-year flood would cause \$35 billion in damages to greater Sacramento, the state forecasts, and it would take at least 2.5 months just to pump out the flooded areas.” Such scenarios sound potentially very similar to the devastation seen in New Orleans that began two years ago today.

The foundation of the SAFELY OUT Project, is the [SAFELY OUT™ Kit](#). Elements of the kit include:

- SAFELY OUT™ Door Hanger (that can be used to signal for assistance using the red “NEED HELP” side, and let others know when the vulnerable are “SAFELY OUT™” using the green side)
- SAFELY OUT™ Refrigerator Magnet Booklet (with essential contact and evacuation information tailored to the needs of each individual or family)
- SAFELY OUT™ Helper Information Sheets (giving those volunteering to assist a vulnerable person the information they need to help)
- SAFELY OUT™ Storage Bag (for keeping spare medicines, medical insurance information, etc. safe inside the refrigerator – a place that is air tight, water tight, and fire resistant)
- SAFELY OUT™ Wallet Information Card (carried by the vulnerable in the event of disaster while away from home)
- SAFELY OUT™ Kit How-To Brochure
- A permanent marker and erasable ink pen to complete the Kit contents

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- An adhesive strip to hang the “NEED HELP” sign in a window should the front door not be easily visible

SAFELY OUT Kits are now available online at [www.CitizenVoice.org](http://www.CitizenVoice.org), or by mail. A \$10 suggested minimum contribution per kit is requested (plus \$2.50 shipping/handling per kit for mail orders.) Those individuals, groups and businesses interested in ordering kits, making a contribution to get kits to others in need, or becoming a SAFELY OUT™ project sponsor can inquire at [www.CitizenVoice.org](http://www.CitizenVoice.org) or by calling (916) 503-3194. Kit orders and contributions can be made online or by mail (mail only, there is no counter service available at this address) to Citizen Voice, 1215 K Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814.

**ABOUT CITIZEN VOICE**

Citizen Voice is a 501C3 nonprofit, nonpartisan movement with a mission to inspire, inform and involve citizens in the public arena on behalf of all, especially the vulnerable. Citizen Voice fulfills its mission by fostering active participation in the public arena as well as involving citizens in both practical immediate intervention and work towards long-term changes that protect the vulnerable. For more information on Citizen Voice, visit [www.CitizenVoice.org](http://www.CitizenVoice.org).

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