

Katrina – Tales From the Front – Volume One

Tuesday, September 6th, 2005
Carlsbad, CA

Hello to all,

I'm headed down to the Gulf Coast region to do volunteer relief work. We're targeting small towns and rural areas that the big logo charities and government agencies usually miss. We hope to help the elderly, infirm and poor people who don't have anyone else to help them dig out.

One of the things we are considering is renting a very small (3-4 yard) dump truck to tow down a trailer & small tractor/loader/blade that my friend Gary has available in Northern Alabama.

The tractor/loader & small dump truck would allow us to greatly increase our ability to quickly clean up people's downed trees, blown apart houses, etc.

Normally, Gary tows the trailer & tractor with his pickup, but we're using that to tow his travel trailer so we'll have someplace to live. So, we need something to tow the tractor/loader down there with.

I called Gary's local Hertz Equipment Rental operation to line up a one month rental of a small dump truck. I talked to the manager, Dennis.

He told me he'd love to help, but he'd gotten an email from his regional manager prohibiting rentals of any equipment for hurricane relief. Dennis was very apologetic and said he'd probably already lost out on several hundred thousand dollars of rentals for the hurricane devastation area because of the policy.

He was nice enough to give me his regional office number, so I called them up.

Frank, the regional manager I spoke to was helpful, but hamstrung in a typically bureaucratic way.

He has two problems:

Problem #1 is the DOT won't allow him to have his really heavy truck equipment (bigger than small trucks) cross state lines. So, for instance, his AL assets couldn't go into MS. This greatly limits flexibility in getting heavy equipment where it is needed when it is needed there. For the large recovery operations, this is a major deal-stopper problem.

Problem #2 is that FEMA has prohibited them from renting any equipment for the hurricane relief effort. FEMA is requiring them, and to his knowledge, all other EQ rental operations, to work from specific FEMA bases, only through FEMA channels and to only rent to FEMA approved parties.

Frank was still waiting for FEMA to provide information as to where to send the equipment, where they'd be basing it and when it might someday actually be put to use to help people.

Your tax dollars at work.

Be well,
Doug