



Sewa International

Service to Humanity is Service to God

CONTACT:

Gitesh Desai (281) 300-7346 or Achalesh Amar (713) 357-8216

Email: houston@sewausa.org

Web: <http://www.sewahouston.org>

Phone: 281.909.SEWA

Houston, Texas (August 28, 2017):

Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Southeast Texas as a Category 4 hurricane. Unprecedented heavy rains are expected to continue for almost a week. Houston, home to almost six million people, is a city under siege. Most neighborhoods are inundated and thousands of people have their houses flooded with more than a few feet of water. People are stranded without food and water. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said, "Houston flooding may be the worst we have ever seen. The loss is in billions of dollars." Sewa International volunteers in Houston are on the ground conducting rescue and relief operations.

The city of Rockport took the Category 4 hurricane head-on with winds blowing at more than 130 miles per hour. Corpus Christi and Houston are expected to get 50 inches of rain. Though downgraded to Category 2, the slow-moving Hurricane Harvey is expected to persist in the area for days of downpour causing catastrophic epic flooding. Some roads in the area are under 25 feet of water. There are reports of people dying in flooded cars and flooded houses.

Preeti Kankikarla, a young professional living with her 65-year-old mother was stranded in her ground floor apartment as the water level kept rising inside her apartment. She heard the radio announcement and called the Sewa hotline. Sewa volunteers in the neighborhood immediately reached her and helped her move into a first-floor apartment. Preeti says, "My deepest gratitude for all the help I received from you during the toughest of our times. I couldn't thank you enough for the prompt actions in response to my request."

The President of Sewa International's Houston Chapter, Gitesh Desai said, "The residents of Houston are staying strong through the crisis and coordinating citizen-led efforts to help thousands of people who are stranded in flooded houses without food and water." Many Indian businesses and places of worship have opened their doors to give shelter to displaced families. Indian restaurants and individual families are providing free packets of freshly prepared Indian food. Sewa is helping in the

logistics.

Mr. Desai said that “Major Indian organizations such as, India House, India Cultural Center, Indo-American Charity Foundation, Hindus of Greater Houston and Indo-American Political Action Committee have decided to coordinate all the relief efforts of the Indian community through Sewa International.” A list of all the free food, shelter and medical help resources is being maintained on the Sewa International website. Teams of volunteers are constantly working the phones coordinating neighborhood relief efforts that Sewa volunteers are conducting in their own local Houston municipalities. Since most of the important connecting roads are flooded and out of service, this coordination is crucial.

In addition, Sewa International volunteers are helping people find shelter and are delivering food to stranded people. Many international students from India at the University of Houston have had their first-floor apartments completely flooded and they have had to move in with their friends on second and third floors. Sewa has rescued and relocated many such students. “A system for pre-registration for volunteers has been set up for cleanup work after the water levels subside,” Mr. Desai said.

Sewa International is appealing to all the people to stay safe and stay inside as much as possible. They are also appealing to all the businesses and nonprofits in the area to offer help in whatever form they can and their resources will be listed in the help directory on the Sewa International website and will be publicized widely in the community.

People seeking help can call 281-909-SEWA (281-909-7392). Those who wish to volunteer or donate for the cause can visit www.sewahouston.org. For regular updates on the weather and flood conditions, as well as relief efforts, people can visit the Sewa Houston Facebook page.