



Matching Need With Help

The logistics industry steps up to the plate.

While Hurricane Katrina was a disastrous event for the U.S. in 2005, some good has come out of it. Among the positive things to result was the birth of the American Logistics Aid Network (ALAN), an organization dedicated to channeling logistics resources in the wake of disaster.

Time for action

In the wake of recent hurricanes Ike and Gustav, ALAN members sprang into action. WERC member David Zuern, vice president of logistics at Invacare Corporation, Elyria, Ohio, for instance, was one of the first to respond after Gustav hit the gulf coast.

Responding to an email from WERC about ALAN, Zuern connected with Catholic Charities through the Aidmatrix web site and learned that there was a need for mattresses, wheelchairs and walkers. With donated items totaling \$500,000 in retail value, Invacare was happy to provide these items from surplus inventory.

Zuern says, "Invacare regularly donates to local charities and shelters, but this was a case where we could make a large donation and really make a difference for a lot of people who had been displaced and were in dire need of basic medical equipment. We were able to move over 250 mattresses, 50 wheelchairs, and 50 walkers into the area

quickly to help out those who needed them most. Catholic Charities was really on the ball and had us deliver directly to six different emergency shelters in Louisiana and Mississippi for immediate disbursement of the equipment."

This is a perfect example of *need meeting help* since Invacare Corporation is the world's leading manufacturer and distributor for medical equipment used in the home. The company designs, manufactures and distributes an extensive line of health care products for the non-acute care environment.

How it all began

The foundation for ALAN was laid in the fall of 2005 immediately following Katrina. Among supply chain professionals, there was a great deal of interest in finding ways to help the victims of Katrina. Mark Richards, vice president of Associated Warehouses Inc., in Orange, Calif. tells us, "A small group got together and issued a call to action. Many logistics professionals felt that the distribution failures seen in the Katrina aid zone were the kinds of issues we deal with on a daily basis and that the profession could be a valuable resource for relief agencies in dealing with future planning and execution."

The following spring, an even larger group met to discuss a way to put together an umbrella organization to support improved distribution in times of need.

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David Zuern

Volunteers deliver some much-needed equipment donated by Invacare Corporation.



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

WERC	Warehousing Education and Research Council
CSCMP	Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals
MHIA	Material Handling Industry of America
IWLA	International Warehouse Logistics Association
IARW	International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses
MHEDA	Material Handling Equipment Dealers Association
GMA	Grocery Manufacturers Association
AFFI	American Frozen Food Institute
FMI	Food Marketing Institute
IRTA	International Refrigerated Transportation Association
WFLO	World Food Logistics Organization

Getting off the ground

Launching ALAN was made easier by the level of commitment from the logistics community, says Richards. "I've found that people in the profession are very helpful and humble," he says. "The core idea was to develop a vehicle to connect people in need with the professionals who wanted to and could help."

Today ALAN is made up of many logistics-related organizations such as WERC, CSCMP, MHIA, the IWLA, the IARW, MHEDA, GMA, AFFI, FMI, IRTA, WFLO and Feeding America who can quickly email requests to members and post information on their websites.

The role of technology

Richards admits that "Our biggest hurdles have been having efficient and effective ways to connect those in need with those who want to give." Key to accomplishing this was finding a technology source that could make those connections.

ALAN learned of Aidmatrix Network, a web-based system that manages donations and volunteers contributing to the coordination of humanitarian relief. "Using the Aidmatrix technology, state and federal agencies can post their needs," says Richards. "These needs are then visible, through the ALAN portal, to people wanting to donate."

Every day need

Richards says that ALAN hopes to provide "the right assets, in the right location, in the right amount, at the right time."

He explains, "There's a need everyday for somebody to provide assistance. It's not just during or after storms of such as we recently experienced. For instance, last year I received a call about the wild fires out in California. A group of ALAN volunteers made a few calls and saw that some of the resources requested were made available where the need existed."

Richards has high hopes for the future of ALAN. "I hope that it becomes widely known throughout our profession," he explains. "Then, as needs come up—whether it be floods, fires, or a terrorist attack—we can respond. Ultimately, we'd like to take the process to a global level, but first we need to fine tune the process at the national level."

For more information on ALAN, go to www.alanaid.org.



SIDEBAR

Not Just for Disasters

The American Logistics Aid Network (ALAN) was formed to provide a coordinated vehicle to channel resources from members of various professional organizations to approved Agencies that provide relief during a time of crisis.

Currently, the Product Donation portal is the only one available through ALAN. And the portal states, "Please keep in mind that leading relief organizations typically seek sizable, bulk donations only when they meet the service delivery needs of a particular relief operation."

In the future, Financial Support and Volunteer Registration will be available as well. At that time, monetary donations will be accepted and ALAN will also focus on the education and training of personnel who may be involved in the logistics of aid provision and in providing logistics consulting to approved agencies.

Currently, there are 10 pages of needs described on the ALAN website and many don't expire until the end of the year or longer. Check it out.

www.alanaid.org

A Special Thanks

ALAN wishes to acknowledge the support of Saddle Creek Corporation and contributions of their Senior Manager, Technical Services, Kathy Fulton. Kathy's expertise and commitment was key to launching the ALAN's website portal months prior to its originally scheduled launch date. "Kathy worked tirelessly to ensure the portal could be operational to respond to the expected needs of hurricane Gustav's victims" said Jock Menzies, ALAN President and Chairman of The Terminal Corporation. Without Saddle Creek's support and the contributions of Kathy, the website portal would not have been able to respond with the successes it did.