

Convoy of Hope Working Through Struggles to Reach Ida Victims With Relief

Over the years of humanitarian ministry, team members at Convoy of Hope have had to learn to improvise and “play things by ear” when it comes to natural disasters.

Such is the case with Hurricane Ida, a Category 4 storm that ripped through Louisiana over the weekend and left catastrophic damage in its wake. Many media reports have said Ida was a stronger hurricane than Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast 16 years ago to the day on Sunday.

Convoy of Hope Vice President of Public Engagement and National Spokesperson Ethan Forhertz, who is on the ground with 23 other members of the Convoy team, said Monday in a phone interview with Charisma News that this storm has caused particular problems in the organization’s efforts to get relief supplies to people who need them. Those issues, however, have not deterred the team from carrying out its mission or its overall kingdom mission, “to feed the hungry and bring help and hope to communities that need it most.”

“The roads in and out and have been extremely difficult to get through, and some are even under water,” Forhertz says. “Some of these areas have been hit very hard, and there are a lot of issues here. We’ve had communication issues with some of the churches and some of the cities we’ve been wanting to get to. People have been unable to take our calls because of the power outages and other things. We’ve sent scout teams to see how we can navigate where we’re going, and it’s been difficult.

“But honestly, we have the best people working at Convoy of Hope,” he adds. “Their hearts are so genuine, and it’s very uplifting for me to see it. They’re working very hard. We’ve

learned to be very flexible, to call audibles. That's what we're doing now."

Monday evening, more than 24 hours after the storm struck landfall with 150 mph winds, Convoy of Hope's team set up camp at Household of Faith Church in Gonzales, a small town of about 11,000 people an hour north of New Orleans. With 19 service "giant" emergency vehicles, Forhertz says the team was forced to consolidate relief supplies into smaller vehicles so they could make their way into areas to help the victims of the storm.

In communication with as many church officials as possible, Forhertz says he has learned that some churches in cities like Houma, an hour and seven minutes north of New Orleans, and La Place, 34 minutes north of New Orleans, have been decimated and some even destroyed.

Through it all, however, Forhertz says many victims of the massive storm have told him that "things could have been worse" and that "their faith has seen them through."

"They're grateful because it always can be worse. We're talking about a storm stronger than Katrina," Forhertz says. "It can be an overwhelming feeling, but there is hope that tomorrow will be a better day."

Forhertz says Convoy will continue to work through the struggles and issues it is currently experiencing to make sure food, water and other supplies reach the people who need them most.

Stay tuned to for more updates on Convoy of Hope's relief efforts in Louisiana. {eo}

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