

From crisis spring tales of the human spirit

As I write this, I am haunted by the heart-breaking images of the devastation wrecked by Hurricane Katrina. The swath of damage to communities, businesses and infrastructure along the U.S. Gulf Coast is mind boggling. Homes and businesses wiped out. Streets flooded. Bridges destroyed. Families separated. Untold lives lost.

But out of this utter chaos emerges hope. Tales of heroism, perseverance and the enduring human spirit. Just as on 9-11, the marine community has rallied and joined with first responders to play a vital role in the rescue and recovery. As I write this, there are some 4,000 Coast Guardsmen, 15 cutters, 37 airplanes and rescue helicopters and numerous other small boats and craft that have responded to the disaster and more help is on the way. Coast Guard air and boat crews have spent tireless hours plucking hurricane victims one by one—many of them their own neighbors—



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from flooded streets and rooftops. Several Coast Guard Stations along the Gulf Coast have been destroyed or severely damaged. Some Coast Guard personnel are unaccounted for.

Early reports indicate that commercial and private boat operators have joined the Coast Guard in the rescue effort, working to near exhaustion. Tugs and barges have already begun operating on the intracoastal waterway, but the ports of Pensacola, Fla., Mobile, Ala., and Pascagoula, Miss., remain closed.

U.S. Navy ships based in Norfolk, Va., and the hospital ship *USNS Comfort* out of Baltimore, were sailing to the coast with food, water, medical supplies and response equipment. The *USS Baatan* and *USNS Swift*, both out of Ingleside, Texas, were already on station off the coast of Louisiana.

Beyond the human toll there is the economic toll. Preliminary estimates are that the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina could exceed a staggering \$25 billion. The Gulf is the nation's energy hub and the oil industry has been hit hard. Offshore rigs are missing, drifting or severely damaged. Almost half of the nation's refinery capacity is in the Gulf.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and private contractors are tackling the task of fixing the breaches in the levees that protect New Orleans from the waters of Lake Ponchartrain.

Over the years, we've developed close ties with the



Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Shawn Beaty looks for survivors in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Beaty is a member of an HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter rescue crew from Clearwater, Fla., assisting in search and rescue efforts in New Orleans

U.S. Coast Guard photo/Petty Officer 2nd Class NyxoLyno Cangemi

city and its people. We've held and attended many conferences, trade shows and events in New Orleans. In fact, we've had to postpone our Offshore Americas 2005 Conference & Expo, which was scheduled to be held Oct. 11-12 in New Orleans. We'll keep you informed of our plans.

Right now, however, is the time to rally around our friends and family on the Gulf Coast and help them rebuild their lives. A good start might be to join the staff of *Marine Log* and Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company by donating to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. For more information, you can visit them on the web at <http://www.redcross.org> or to make a donation to the Hurricane 2005 Relief, go to <http://store.yahoo.com/redcross-donate>. Let's start to make a difference.

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