



# KATRINA Daily News

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## RED HORSE team saddles up for Keesler restoration ops

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81st Training Wing Public Affairs

When Hurricane Katrina slammed Keesler AFB, one of the most telltale signs of the storm's ferocity was the sight of much of the base's majestic live oaks and tall pine trees -- snapped, uprooted and tossed across streets and atop houses -- looking as if Godzilla had gone ballistic. Especially within its housing areas, carcasses of storm-felled trees and other debris literally entrapped a large part of the base.

But when base officials went looking for help, a powerful RED HORSE hoofed it to the rescue. In reality, this thundering equine is a highly specialized human team of Air Force engineers -- the 823rd RED HORSE Squadron from Hurlburt Field, Fla. RED HORSE is an acronym for Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operations Repair Squadron Engineers. This worldwide on-call combat engineering unit has staggering global mission mix -- performing everything from rapid runway repair in war zones to dormitory construction in peacetime.

While their name is long, their Airmen make quick work of projects like massive tree-clearing projects. For several days after Katrina, the buzzing sound of RED HORSE chainsaws muted the noise of backup power generators during widespread electricity outages.

Emerging from his tiny front-end loader during a break, team lead Tech. Sgt. Steven Stanford was asked to give his first impression of post-hurricane Keesler and its Biloxi neighbor, and one word seemed to say it all. "Wow," he responded. "It was a disaster. I couldn't believe how much damage there was." Setting down a heavy-duty chainsaw after cutting several large pine tree limbs, a saw dust- and sweat-coated Senior Airman Zachary Wolf from sounded equally impressed.

"It was a wreck, I couldn't believe it," he said. "The worst thing I saw was a house pushed off the foundation and a



**SSgt. Dean Stephen, 823rd RED HORSE Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla., wheels his front-end loader through an off-base housing area in search of more hurricane debris. The combat engineering unit deployed here quickly after Hurricane Katrina to begin clearing the way for Keesler AFB restore its operations. (U.S. Air Force photo by MSgt. Dan Oberly)**

mother and child just walking around their house, just looking for their stuff, with no place to live. It was terrible." Even as their convoy approached the Keesler area, their structural engineering skills were called into play.

"The bridges we passed coming westbound had barges that had slammed against their abutments, so we had to make sure these bridges were safe for traffic," Stanford explained.

"When we hit the base, it was pretty wild. The worst things I saw were the lower housing areas and the commissary. You could see the waterline five to six feet high up on the walls, and the only salvageable things were on the top shelves."

In addition to the tree clearing operation, the RED HORSE team used their equipment to remove all of the

water-damaged contents of Keesler's base exchange/commissary complex.

According to Sergeant Stanford, two of a RED HORSE unit's greatest attributes are its speed and self-sufficiency.

"We can get in here a lot faster with so much damage outside the base," he said. "We're self-contained and loaded up. We were here in a day and a half. We have the logistical people, services, a doc and mechanics. We have about everything a base would have except the fire department and security forces."

Their Keesler tasks are progressing well, the RED HORSE engineers reported. "I think we're doing great, and making awesome progress. Some people who have flown back here from New Orleans at night said that when you fly over the base, it glows. That shows you how much has been done here."

# KEESLER BASICS:

## General Information

**Evacuation info** – All remaining dependents who plan to evacuate are required to report to the Levitow Bldg. (Fish Bowl/Family Assistance Center) to identify your method of evacuation. Please sign up at the Fish Bowl as soon as possible. If you are leaving by **commercial airline**, military buses will provide transportation to Mobile airport daily from the Levitow Bldg. at 7 a.m. today through Friday.

Contact vehicle operations at DSN 597-2430 or 2432 to sign up. Please provide your departure date. If you are leaving via POV, please provide your departure date.

**AAFES** – Beginning today, the Mini Mall retail store, barber shop and Subway will be open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

The Service Station remains open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Unattended fueling is available 24 hours with a major credit card only after 6 p.m.

**Fish Bowl Movie Schedule – Today:** 10:30 a.m., Little Giants; Independence Day, 7 p.m.;

**Storage Pods** – Storage rooms and pods are available. See your unit representative.

**Food** – Both dining facilities are open.

**Breakfast:** 5:30 to 8 a.m.

**Lunch:** 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Dinner:** 5 to 9 p.m.

**Keesler 24-hour bus schedule:**  
(minutes past the hour)

**332nd Training Squadron:** 0000/0030

**Shoppette/Subway parking:** 0000/0032

**Welch Theater:** 0004/0034

**Levitow Bldg.:** 0007/0037

**CE/Supply bus stop:** 0010/0040

**Dorm/Tent City bus stop:** 0011/0041

**5000 block/main gate stop:** 0013/0043

**Shaw House:** 0014/0044

**Muse Manor:** 0015/0045

**Hospital/Tyer House:** 0017/0047

**Tent City/Comm Sq./Soccer Field:**

0018/0048

**TALCE/Bldg. 222:** 0020/0050

**Base Ops:** 0022/0052

**Gasoline** – Gasoline is available 24 hours at the AAFES Service Station; \$30 limit with a major credit at unattended pumps.

**Fitness Center** – The Blake Fitness Center is open 24 hours until further notice.

**Area Schools** – Biloxi schools plan to resume classes Oct. 3. Ocean Springs is planning to resume classes the week of Sept. 26.

## Claims Information

**Claims Briefings** – Legal representatives provide claims briefings for all personnel at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily. Call DSN 597-5404 for more information.

**Advance Claim Payment** – If you plan to file a claim with the military, you may be eligible to receive advance payment. Maximum amounts are determined case-by-case. Visit the claims office for more information.

**USAA** – USAA is located at the Levitow Bldg. Their hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact a representative at (800) 531-8222 before visiting.

**GEICO** – Representatives are available to answer questions at the Levitow Bldg. until further notice. Call claims into the GEICO regional office at (800) 841-3000.

## Finance Information

**Finance** – Limited financial services are available at the Levitow Bldg. from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Customer service hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. To reach a representative for customer service/travel pay related issues call DSN 597-7479. For budget issues, call DSN 597-2770. Contact a finance representative at DSN 597-7256 for additional information.

## Health Care Information

**Emergency Room/Urgent care clinic** – Medical care is available at the EMEDS tent hospital located directly across from Tyer House and beside the Sablich Center. Routine or non-urgent sick call hours are 8-11 a.m. and 3-6 p.m. daily. 24-hour emergency care is available. Those not in the local area can contact the nearest military medical facility or call (800) 444-5445.

**Life Skills** – Life Skills Support Teams are located in the Fish Bowl and at the EMEDS

tent hospital. A mental health provider is on-call 24 hours through the EMEDS.

**Health Care for Military Families** – Military treatment facilities across the U.S. have extended hours, established refugee clinics and begun many other creative programs to take care of displaced active duty family members and retirees.

TRICARE has waived referral requirements for Keesler's TRICARE Prime enrollees. Necessary care can be obtained from any network provider with no preauthorization required. Call (800) 444-5445 for help in finding care.

**SARC** – Keesler's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator is available 24 hours a day. If you are the victim of an assault, contact DSN 597-7278 or the Keesler Command Post at DSN 377-4330 for immediate assistance.

**Medical Transportation** – A medical shuttle will transport personnel for routine medical issues from 8 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. Shuttles will stop at the Welch Theater, Thompson Hall, Wolfe Hall, Building 5022, Shaw House, Muse Manor and the Clinical Research Laboratory.

**Potential health issue** – Due to the severe hurricane damage on base causing an abundance of sharp, dirty objects, cleanup efforts may expose workers to tetanus, a disease that is easily transmitted through dirty puncture wounds and open injuries. Keesler Medical Center has provided the following advice:

All wounds should be cleaned with soap and water twice daily. Do not put an open wound in sea water or the "mud" left from flooding. If you do, wash with soap and water immediately afterward. If your wound is large or deep, seek medical care.

It is important to know when you received your tetanus shot. This immunization is given every 10 years for best protection against tetanus. If you are active duty, Reserve or Guard and have not been called in by public health, your immunization is current and protective. If you are not military and cannot remember your last immunization, seek medical care for smaller wounds also.

**Dental Clinic** – The Dental Clinic is open for acute needs from 7:30-9 a.m. and 1-2 p.m. The temporary telephone number is DSN 597-3003.