



News release

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Post-Ike revenue critical to small businesses

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – Hurricane Ike tore through southeast Texas on Sept. 13 like a mean herd of Longhorn on a long, sweltering cattle drive. Everything that stood in his way paid a price. Lives were lost. Homes and businesses were wiped out. The fortunate among us spent the week following his departure taking plywood off our windows and stacking debris head high along our curbs. Those who work for corporate America – who aren't self employed or who don't work for someone who is – toiled away secure in the knowledge that a paycheck would be waiting for them at the end of September to pay those bills that keep arriving no matter what.

How about those small business owners, though? You know – the ones that represent more than 99% of all employers. They create three out of every four new jobs and account for over 50% of our private-sector business share of the nation's gross domestic product. What do you think they did on Sept. 13, 14, 15, etc.? Well, you can rest assured that they weren't taking a hurrication – a word that's been coined for time off due to the likes of Ike and his brothers and sisters. If these owners didn't get up and running immediately, with or without electric power, their businesses, their employees, and the families of both would suffer the consequences.

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership has supported small businesses for more than three decades. It's a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment. Members include over 270 business partners encompassing 13 cities and Galveston and Harris counties. Bob Mitchell, BAHEP president, stated, "Immediately after the hurricane, we assisted our municipalities and regional allies in getting information distributed about disaster relief efforts. While we will continue to do this, it's equally important to turn our attention to our small business partners. BAHEP will work with them for as long as necessary to help their businesses come back even better than before."

Mark Conrad is the chairman of BAHEP's Small Business Committee. He runs a small business as owner of Express Employment Professionals in Bay Area Houston. He stated, "Of the Bay Area Houston

small businesses with which I work, many were back to work the Monday after the storm – days before we had power or phones – calling each other, our employees and customers on cell phones to see how everyone was doing. Most importantly, we wanted to know what we could do to help them get back on their feet, since we needed to get back to business as usual – and very quickly.”

Conrad also spoke of the resiliency of America’s small business owners and particularly those in this region. He said that they have a “we will make it” mindset and a strong drive for survival. He related heroic stories of small business owners like Robin Vest with Vesco Office Supplies in La Porte, Texas, who lost his home and his entire local inventory when Ike tore the roof off his business. Considering all that he lost, Vest was open and taking orders on Sept. 15. Conrad related, “For all of us, the loss of revenue during this time is our most critical concern. The revenue is what we so desperately need to make sure that our employees continue to be paid and our operating costs are met. While it’s great that the Small Business Administration is offering low interest loans to assist us, this won’t cover our loss of revenue. And honestly, even for those fortunate enough to qualify, they get what they really don’t want – another loan to pay off.”

On behalf of small business owners across the region, Conrad asks that consumers go to them when they need anything from office supplies to gas to flooring or just a good, hot meal. He concluded, “We not only want your business, but we need your business as we continue our quest for the American dream. We will make it; we have to.”

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Mark Conrad, chairman of Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership’s Small Business Committee, urges consumers to support their local small businesses. The return of revenue following Hurricane Ike is critical to their survival.