



**GULF DATA SYSTEMS**  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

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## **Immediate Systems Support Available To Credit Unions Affected by Hurricane Rita**

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*After Katrina, GDS's offer of free systems and back-office support helped credit unions displaced by the hurricane. Now the Mobile, Alabama based data processor readies to do the same for Texas and Louisiana credit unions in advance of Hurricane Rita.*

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With hundreds of Texas and Louisiana credit unions and their members in the path of Hurricane Rita, Gulf Data Systems of Mobile, Alabama is devoting personnel and services to provide free support in the affected areas until normalcy is restored. Credit unions which may sustain disruptions in service, loss of staff, or damage to their buildings are offered free support in an effort to return critical services to their hard-hit communities.

"We learned an important lesson from Hurricane Katrina," says Leo Vaulin, CEO and owner of GDS. "Once the storm has struck, it's too late. Phone service, including cell phones, got disrupted. Folks were in the dark without power and communications. Vital links to the Internet were disrupted. Credit unions were unable to process drafts, ACH, and debit cards."

He adds, "Even worse, they were unable to take calls from their members, to provide the much-needed assurance that their deposits were safe, and that funds were available to start re-building."

GDS rode out Katrina in a secure DataCenter in Mobile, equipped with an underground fiber optic link to a Internet "backbone" which provided both phone and web access throughout the storm, and a built-in generator which supplied power to their servers. *None of GDS's customers experienced any interruption in back-office operations.* Drafts, ACH, debit cards, and shared branching transactions were processed at the DataCenter even while the storm raged outside.

“We were blessed. Our credit unions and their members were able to access their accounts with no disruption,” says Bernie Desrosiers, GDS Manager of Sales. “Some of the credit unions were without power, but they were still able to connect to their systems over the internet. Some of them came to our DataCenter and worked out of our offices.”

During the weeks that followed, GDS reached out to other credit unions which were not so fortunate. GDS extended an offer for free systems and back-office support – to all credit unions displaced by the hurricane.

“It doesn’t matter what data processing software they were using,” says Jeanne Croom, GDS Director of Information Technology. “We can provide a ‘virtual branch’ through any internet connection, even dial-up. If a manager can find a phone line and a power supply, we can get them up and running, and back in contact with their members.”

This capability allows GDS to offer unique “hurricane relief” to the credit union community by setting up a functioning branch or outreach of regular operations. Full-service Voice-Response, On-line Banking, website and email will allow access to members who have been evacuated to shelters, sought refuge outside the area, or lost their transportation.

Navigator Credit Union of Pascagoula, MS, was able to set up a Call Center and on-line banking using the GDS OnCUE Home Banking server. “We got the word that Navigator needed help on Tuesday; they were up and running in our office by Thursday,” says Jeanne Croom. “We pulled data from their Symitar system and made it available to their members. The first day we brought them up, they had 6 lines ringing almost non-stop, and we got over 2100 log-ons to the OnCUE Home Banking system.”

Loans, ACH transmissions, direct deposit of payroll and retirement checks and the ability to use ATM’s are critical services for a regional population largely displaced by this natural disaster. Back office operations may also be hindered by the staff that can’t get to the credit union to balance GL’s, manage accounting issues, and manage draft and ACH processing.

“People need a financial base of operations to apply for loans, get cash, and deposit their funds from insurance companies and relief agencies,” Bernie Desrosiers comments. “We specialize in helping small credit unions get their feet under them on a regular basis, so we felt we could help people. The small credit unions are particularly vulnerable to unexpected disasters like this, so it’s impossible not to reach out to them when we really understand what they are going through.”

Gulf Data Systems, a Mobile-based provider of CU data processing since 1977, serves credit unions all over the U.S.

“This is close to home,” Desrosiers continues. “We believe in the credit union philosophy and decided the best service we could provide to help people would be to get their credit unions up and running, as close to normal as we can make it.”

Owner Leo Vaulin made the call to provide services for free until the credit unions could resume their normal operations. “No strings,” Vaulin says. “We’ve been part of the credit union community for almost thirty years and it is the least we could do for people we really care about.”

Credit unions who would like to take GDS up on the offer to restore services as quickly as possible are asked to contact the following people, or visit the website at [www.gulfdata.org](http://www.gulfdata.org) for complete information and assistance.

- ▶ **Help Desk (Toll Free): 800-293-7554 Ext. 229**
- ▶ **Leo Vaulin (cellphone): 251-604-0659**
- ▶ **Jeanne Croom (cellphone): 251-605-3365**
- ▶ **Bernie Desrosiers: 800-293-7554 Ext. 222**