



**Lt. Rocky Clement, Carabelle Field Office, hands a case of MREs to a Vietnamese shrimper. The shrimping trawlers were trapped in the Industrial Canal near Biloxi since the drawbridge providing access to the bay couldn't be raised due to storm damage.**



**Sgt. Eddie Gatlin, Lt. Buddy Gomez, Officer Joe Murphy, Officer John Bell, Officer Danny Arnette, K-9 Luke, Officer Tim Trepanier, Officer Willie Mailoto, Officer Lee Hendrix were but a few of the FWC Officers who responded to areas devastated by Katrina.**



**Officer Jimmy Jordan not only delivered dog food to Wildlife Care and Rescue Center volunteer Tammi Carson, but made daily milk deliveries. Tammi's daughter must have dairy products every day because of her medical condition and Jordan made sure she had a constant supply.**



**Lt. Buddy Gomez, Pensacola, delivers water to a family in a rural community north of Biloxi.**

"I was amazed. I saw the rope burns on their bodies and then saw the tree... It looked like an apple core. If the wind had been much more fierce, they wouldn't have made it."

Maltais said the shrimp boat made it through the storm also. Living conditions for FWC officers and other personnel in the rescue operation have been described as "primitive." Maltais laughed, saying, "That's putting it in a good light. We're living out of our trucks. However, our morale is great. In fact, my squad has just volunteered to stay here for another week."

The squad consists of Lt. Gary Klein, officers Harold Barry, Brad Givens, Tony Wright, Craig Maguire, Paul Graham and Maltais, all from the Jacksonville Field Office. Capt. John Burton, from the Crystal River Field Office, is leading the detail.

"I worked the detail in Pensacola after Hurricane Ivan last year. But this is even worse," Maltais said. "I'm just glad to be here to be able to help out."

Lt. Jeff Hudson and FWC Officers Kevin Hansen and Herb Fererking from the Titusville Field Office, helped to secure and safely transport fuel throughout the disaster area. "Officer Hansen found fuel all over the state of Mississippi," Hudson said. The officers located depots that had fuel and then escorted tanker trucks to collect it and make fuel drops. "Officers Kevin Hansen and Herb Fererking escorted trucks to four area hospitals to keep them powered up and running," Hudson explained.

"FWC delivered fuel to the county maintenance building in Purvis, Miss., and an assisted living facility that was within two hours of running completely out of diesel for their generators," he said. Lt. Col. Mike Wiwi led a group of more than 130 rescue workers and police officers in the three Mississippi counties, providing security in the region and using boats for search-and-rescue missions.

"Some of the people were trapped in their attics by rising water," he said. "We saved a lot of lives just during the first week of the mission in Mississippi. The first day we actually rescued eight different individuals who probably would not have made it had not the search-and-rescue teams, with the support of our folks, been in there."

Wiwi said he worked all of the hurricanes in Florida over the past couple of years, plus Hurricane Andrew in 1992. He said Hurricane Katrina left the worst damage.

"This one by far surpassed any damage, catastrophic damage, that I've ever seen, both in wind and storm surge. It was significant."

While survivors were the first priority, pets and wildlife have not been forgotten. Officer Jimmy Jordan from Alachua County, made a special run to Wildlife Care and Rescue Center to deliver 500 pounds of dog food to Tammi Carson, a volunteer at the center.

According to Lt. Scott Kihei, patrol supervisor for Columbia and Baker Counties, "We heard about Tammi needing the food from one of the Mississippi Marine Patrol dispatchers we're working with on this deployment. We had plenty of dog food for our K-9s, so we wanted to help."

The storm destroyed the center and all the animals were moved out to volunteers' homes.

"Right now, I have a red-tailed hawk, three doves and two crows in small cages in my backyard, a baby duck in a bathtub, a screech owl in my garage and an assortment of rats, baby opossums and squirrels in my living room," Carson said. "Officer Jordan came this morning and dropped off 10, 50-pound bags of dog food. I can't explain what this donation means to us."

FWC continues to provide relief to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Teams are being rotated in and out of Mississippi every seven days. This mission marked the first time in the history of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that the agency's officers were dispatched to help victims of a natural disaster in another state.