

GA Pilots Aid in Hurricane Harvey Relief Efforts



September 7, 2017 - Among the thousands of volunteers aiding recovery efforts in the Houston, Texas, area following the destruction caused by Hurricane Harvey are a few groups spearheaded by general aviation pilots and EAA members.

A group named [Aviators Helping South Texas](#), operating out of Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport (KCXO), has airlifted nearly 300 tons of water and about 50 tons of other goods to areas of Texas affected by the hurricane, specifically Beaumont.

Started as a grassroots civilian relief effort by Kayla Perez, Michael Barksdale Sr., Michael Barksdale Jr., Vickie Croston, and Merwyn Croston, Aviators Helping South Texas soon transformed into a joint military-civilian operation when Michael Jr., a military member, arranged for Army assistance for greater lifting power.

While the core group for the aid effort was roughly eight individuals, Michael Sr. estimated about 1,000 people, between civilians and military members, helped out with the operation.

“The cooperation between the military and civilians was incredible,” Michael Sr. said. “This was a civilian-directed operation using both civilian and military aircraft. EAA members were part of the effort.”

Now that supplies can be trucked into the area as water levels have receded, the operation has ceased.

[Operation Airdrop](#), out of Denton, Texas, is a volunteer rescue organization composed of general aviation pilots. With around 150 pilots, OAD has made more than 350 flights and delivered 250,000-plus pounds of cargo to the Houston area.

In addition to airlifting water and nonperishable food items to the Texas coast, Operation Airdrop has also relocated victims at the request of the Salvation Army.

EAA Chapter 670 in Fort Worth, Texas, has had many of its members assist with Operation Airdrop.

The Commemorative Air Force used its Douglas C-47 Skytrain *Bluebonnet Belle* and B-25 *Devil Dog* to airlift countless supplies to the Houston area as well.