Hello Texas Retailers!

Since our last newsletter in mid-August, Hurricane Harvey made a direct strike on the Texas coast and devastated the Houston metro area. We hope that all of you and your families who reside in the areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey are safe and on the road to recovery. For this month’s newsletter, we are devoting the vast majority of it to providing you the most up to date information and resources regarding the ongoing recovery from Hurricane Harvey.

In late August, we all knew Harvey was headed towards Texas and we were prepared. What no one could have known was the extent to which Harvey would ravage our state. As hard as it was to watch, or in some of your individual cases, experience, I can report to you that TRA answered the call. Our members and team responded in equal measure in the relief effort to the record devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey. We want to acknowledge and sincerely thank you
for the truly remarkable response from our industry to this historic natural disaster.

As mentioned above, TRA and our members were prepared for the needs and requests that we expected to come in the immediate timeframe after the storm from authorities in the impacted areas. Beginning on the Sunday afternoon after the initial landfall, TRA staff began to efficiently and quickly manage and handle these requests, which became many. The requests ranged from getting food and water, to prescriptions, clothes and toys, and even pet food, to the impacted areas and shelters. We quickly established ourselves as a “go-to” resources for the Governor’s office, Houston Mayor’s office, DPS and countless other agencies and local authorities. Also, we enlisted the assistance of our national partners at NRF, RILA, NGA and FMI in not only spreading the word on the need for relief supplies, but also in helping us navigate the federal bureaucracy to speed not only relief to those in need, but also to facilitate coordination with their state level colleagues to get retailers up and running ASAP in the impacted areas. Additionally, we updated the TRA website to be a resource for our industry and the public regarding store status, as well as information on how anyone could help. Lastly, as you may have seen in our updates, two members of the TRA team took a boat from Austin down to Houston and joined in the massive rescue effort you may have seen on TV. We are proud of Louie Carr and Landon Campbell, from BMUSED Digital, TRA’s social media and website consultants, for answering the call and jumping in to help.

As we know, the impact of Hurricane Harvey is beyond anything anyone predicted, and the effects will be with us for quite some time. There will continue to be a need for varied amounts and types of supplies in the coming weeks and months. TRA is continuing to coordinate with local and state authorities, as well as with many of our fellow TRA members, regarding relief efforts for the areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey. We encourage all of you to continue to help where you can. That said, we are truly blown away by the remarkable response of our members. Since Harvey made landfall, so many members of TRA have stepped up and donated incredible amounts of money and/or products to those affected by Hurricane Harvey. Your generosity and efforts have been off the charts! We have put together a short video below about our industry’s awesome response to Hurricane Harvey.

If you are able and want to help in the recovery effort in anyway, you still can. Please contact Justin Williamson on the TRA staff for information on how you can help.

Since Hurricane Harvey, there has been initial action to assist in the recovery at both the federal and state levels. At the federal level, over $7 billion was authorized in initial Hurricane Harvey relief money as part of the omnibus bill Congress passed in early September to keep the federal government funded and the federal debt limit from being exceeded until December 8th. We expect that later this fall additional funding for hurricane relief will be authorized by Congress. At the state level, House Speaker Joe Straus, recently issued his fist five interim charges, all dealing with how Hurricane Harvey impacted state government. We expect additional interim charges to come from the House Speaker, as well as the Lt. Governor later this year, and we believe that several of those interim charges will also be focused on hurricane preparedness, response and recovery.

As our state recovers from Hurricane Harvey and life begins to get back to normal, please continue to keep Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast in your thoughts and prayers. Additionally, as we move into fall and the busiest part of the year for our industry, know that your TRA team is here to serve you. As always, please don’t hesitate to contact us at any time.

Thank you again for all you have done to help Texas get through and recover from Hurricane Harvey, and thank you for your continued support of TRA.

Sincerely,
Texas Retailers Respond to Hurricane Harvey

See How Texas Retailers Responded!

Legislative Update
Federal Update
President Donald Trump on September 8th signed a measure tying emergency funding for hurricane relief with measures that would raise the debt ceiling and keep the government open for three months. Read more from CNN here.

State Update
Texas House Speaker Joe Straus last week asked three House committees to begin studying issues related to Hurricane Harvey and state preparations for future natural disasters. You can view his press release by clicking here.

Texas Tribune: Texting ban among more than 650 new Texas laws that take effect September 1, 2017

Affiliate Partner Spotlight: ANCO Insurance

ANCO insurance is TRA's endorsed provider for the full range of insurance coverages for your business, including property, general liability, auto, workers compensation, occupational accident, life, group health and disability. You can count on an insurance program customized for your business with a commitment to serving TRA's membership and providing personal attention to each client. ANCO is known for superior customer service standards, quick response times to calls & emails, along with individual care. Visit www.insuranceforretailers.com for more information.

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The Center for Retailing Studies at Texas A&M University announces a new partnership with the Texas Retailers Association as a 2017-2018 TREF grantee.

The Texas Retailers Education Foundation (TREF) is the charitable educational foundation of the Texas Retailers Association (TRA). TREF was founded to promote a better-trained workforce in retail, through investment in high school and college education programs that focus on teaching retailing career competencies. Approximately $1.4 million has been awarded from TREF to the Texas Grant Program since 2001.

“Texas A&M University is proud to partner with the Texas Retailers Association. Since opening our doors in 1983, the Center for Retailing Studies’ purpose has been to promote and prepare young people for careers in retailing,” said Kelli Hollinger, director of the Center for Retailing Studies at Texas A&M. “This fully aligns with the Texas Retailers Education Foundation’s mission to provide scholarships and learning opportunities that encourage the next generation of retail professionals in Texas.”

For more than 90 years, TRA has represented retail professionals in Texas, and provided them with a voice in Austin and Washington D.C. TRA has worked to support and protect the concerns of its members through government advocacy, industry information, education programs, and scholarship funds.

Members of TRA include major Texas-based retailers such as H-E-B, JCPenney, and Academy Sports + Outdoors, as well as hundreds of independent jewelry shops, hardware stores, specialty apparel boutiques, booksellers, and more.
As a TREF grantee, Texas A&M becomes the first Tier 1 Research university to partner with TRA.

“Developing transformational leaders to work at companies that drive a robust state economy is central to the public service that a flagship university like Texas A&M provides,” Hollinger added. “The distinction as a Texas Retailer’s Education Foundation recipient university is an honor.”

Grocers Corner - In the Cart

WIC eWIC Software Update

Version 4 (V4) Update (Conversion to X9.93 2008)

The Texas WIC EBT Staff are working with Solutran and other Smartcard WIC states to develop standardized V4 capability. We anticipate these enhancements to be included in the new system, which is planned for early 2018. Texas and other Smartcard states will continue to support the existing V2 (X9.93 2002) claim files until not allowed by USDA FNS, so systems developers are not yet required to move to V4. There is an FNS mandate requiring retailer implementation of V4 before the end of 2018. Texas WIC doesn’t have a schedule of dates for implementation yet. It is critical for us to know those dates so we can properly budget time and costs to update our systems.

TX WIC Split Tender

Just a reminder that effective October 1, 2017, all WIC Vendors POS Systems will be required to accept Split Tender transactions from WIC participants. Generally this software update is handled by your POS provider. The software update and certification must be approved and tested by Texas WIC. The good news is that this process will increase your redemption of fruits and vegetables via the WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV). Please click here to see the WIC Vendor Alert issued on the issue this summer.
Hurricane Harvey Update

Fuel Waivers

As a result of the continuing impacts on Gulf Coast-area refineries and disruption to the fuel distribution system caused by Hurricane Harvey; EPA has waived requirements for reformulated gasoline through September 26 and low volatility conventional gasoline through September 15 in Texas.

TX SNAP Program Harvey Temporary Changes

Please click on the link below to review the changes made to the SNAP Program in Texas to deal with the after effects to participants and future participants in the SNAP Program. This link outlines early benefit distribution, automatic replacement benefits, extension of benefits, hot food waiver, and working on what is called Disaster SNAP benefits which would be short term benefits for those families recovering from Hurricane Harvey damage, click here.

Disaster SNAP Program Benefits Approved for Texas

Disaster SNAP Program benefits have been approved for 39 counties in Texas. D-SNAP as it is commonly called are temporary benefits that allow folks displaced by an event like Hurricane Harvey to apply for SNAP on a short term basis. There is a disaster income limit qualification but includes disaster related expenses in the determination. This is a benefit that could help not only some of our customers but our impacted employees as well. To review the note and information from USDA/FNS, click here.

TX WIC Program Harvey Temporary Changes

Texas WIC Program also implemented temporary changes allowing flexibility with some of the major product categories and is effective from September 3- September 24, 2017. Reminder- this flexibility with egg, fluid milk, and bread is only to be used in the event the participant’s prescribed authorized food item isn’t available. Cost Containment guidelines still are a consideration. Click here to review the temporary changes implemented by TX WIC.

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About the Texas Retailers Association

The Texas Retailers Association (TRA) is a 501(c) 6 non-profit organization dedicated to keeping Texas “retail friendly” for business owners through legislative advocacy. Since 1926, our diverse membership has represented every segment of the retail industry throughout Texas — from the smallest neighborhood store to the largest corporate chain. Recognized as the Voice of Texas Retail, TRA effectively advocates for Texas retailers at the State and Federal level while providing value-added services and partner programs for its members. Visit www.txretailers.org and join today!

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