COVER Activation for Potential Isaac Evacuees

The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism has activated the COVER program, due to potential evacuation of the Gulf Coast by Tropical Storm Isaac. COVER stands for Communication of Vacancies Emergency Response Plan. Created in response to the influx of travelers during Hurricane Katrina, the system is activated when an emergency forces evacuation from surrounding areas into Arkansas.

Travelers from evacuated and affected areas will likely turn first to radio and television broadcasts, to the internet and to news organizations to receive the latest updates and information about where they need to go. By providing information about COVER in your broadcasts and on your website, you can assist these evacuees in finding lodging quickly.

Lodging industry members have already been contacted and advised to enter into COVER available vacancies at their properties. These numbers will be updated as rooms are taken.

To utilize COVER, go to www.arkansas.com/cover. Vacancies are organized by their distance to each entrance point into the state. Travelers can also receive COVER updates by subscribing to the program Twitter feed @ArkCover. Updates will be noted with the hash tag #ARKCOVER.

Lodging facilities needing assistance with COVER should contact info@arkansas.com.
To watch an informative video about this new website, go to http://youtu.be/GmyVGCw3BDQ

For more information, check out the www.arkansas.com/Cover site or contact Kat Robinson, communications manager at kat.robinson@arkansas.gov or (501) 682-7606.

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COVER was inspired by the influx of evacuees into Arkansas following Hurricane Katrina. During that catastrophe, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates 1.1 million people over the age of 16 were forced to evacuate their homes. Many of those who fled Louisiana and Mississippi came into Arkansas – and drove past available accommodations while searching out a place to stay. The result? Properties on major thoroughfares were packed while lodging operators located on secondary roads still had ample availability.
COVER was developed with these travelers in mind. In the case of a mass evacuation in any surrounding state, COVER is activated. Lodging managers are able to enter the rooms they have available into the website, and travelers can log on and find those rooms within a 160 mile radius of their location. These emergency visitors to Arkansas may also enter their email address or cell phone number and receive messages along their route with lodging updates.

The purpose of the COVER program is two-fold: to assist people looking for shelter during a natural disaster and to increase business for members of the Arkansas Tourism Industry. Additional information on COVER is available on [http://www.arkansas.com/cover/](http://www.arkansas.com/cover/).