

# FEMA Staging Area Springs to Life as Housing Mission Draws to a Close, Another Gains Momentum

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**BATON ROUGE, La.** — Tractor trailers move 14'x 60' mobile homes through the guarded staging area gate at regular intervals. Dozens move each day, in and out.

These manufactured housing units—MHUs—no longer needed by 2016 Louisiana flood survivors are carefully inspected, marked with IDs and inventoried at this busy lot in the Sherwood Forest area of Baton Rouge before heading to their next destination. Many are on their way to Texas to support the Hurricane Harvey recovery there.

Most of the nearly 4,600 MHUs that served as temporary housing after the August 2016 flood passed through these staging area gates. As the Louisiana recovery moves forward, these carefully inspected “like-new” one-, two-, or three-bedroom mobile homes find new life where needed most.

“We probably receive anywhere from 10 to 15 units a day coming in from the field,” said FEMA’s Charles Duane Grice, Jr. who supervises the Sherwood Forest staging area. “We have about eight units going back out to Texas each day.”

To date, more than 700 MHUs have already made their way to the Lone Star state, but not until each one is thoroughly inspected to be safe, sanitary and functional. Between the time an MHU arrives at the Baton Rouge staging area and the unit’s keys are handed to its new occupant, each must pass four inspections.

“Louisiana is glad to support the recovery of our neighboring state,” said FEMA’s John Long, the federal coordinating officer in charge of recovery efforts in Louisiana. “While many are going to Texas, this staging site also provides equipment and supplies to Florida and California, two states also recovering from disasters.”



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Manufactured homes played a significant role in Louisiana's recovery from the 2016 flood. At the program's peak, 4,600 units housed more than 12,000 survivors. Today, the number of housing units still occupied is about a third of that.

The pace of activity at the staging area has increased in recent weeks, as more and more Louisiana survivors complete repairs to their flood-damaged dwellings and return home. FEMA contractors remove the MHU from the property owner's site or commercial pad, replace sod as necessary, and transport the unit back to Sherwood Forest.

There are currently 940 units at the 125-acre site. Units are neatly arranged by size and coded to indicate such characteristics as number of bedrooms and whether or not they are handicap accessible.

The units that are not suitable for disaster survivors are sold through the General Service Administration, and sales are going well. More than 1,000 MHUs have already been sold at prices that average around \$10,000 each.

