

Primate Center Powers Up

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newwave@tulane.edu

For two weeks, staff members of the Tulane National Primate Research Center have been running on adrenaline, working nonstop--even climbing over downed trees -- to return to the Covington, La., based center and help it get back up and running.

When the power came back on yesterday (Sept. 14), they were closer to that goal. Center officials put out a call for employees to return to work or contact their supervisors if they cannot report. More information for employees is available by calling 985-892-2040.



Getting electricity was the key to being "up and running," says Mike Aertker, associate director of administration and operations for the primate center.

Aertker was one of about 60 people who rode out Hurricane Katrina at the primate center facilities, which he says didn't lose as much as a single window. "There are a lot of trees down, but minimal damage to buildings," he says. Once the storm had passed, the center's facilities and veterinary medicine staffs got to work, getting everything ready to reopen. Aertker says it will be another week or so before the research projects are back up and running.

The primate center is also serving as a storage point for critical research projects from both the health sciences center and uptown campus. "We've been coordinating getting the animals out of the vivariums and pulling out research materials uptown and downtown," Aertker says.

Laura Levy, associate senior vice president for research, says faculty members seeking information about their research should contact their department chairs or center directors, who are meeting weekly to share research updates in sessions organized by Paul Whelton, senior vice president for health sciences.

Sounding tired but upbeat, Aertker said he had been touched by the dedication of the center staff and the support from members of the Tulane Health Sciences Center Police Department who worked long hours before and after the storm to ensure the

safety of the center and its employees. Strangers have also been willing to help -- he has fielded calls from other primate centers wanting to see what they can do. "In this storm we have seen the worst of people in some of the things we've seen on TV -- but we've also really seen the best of people, too," he says.