

Tulane offers places for rest and recovery during cleanup operations

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mtravis@tulane.edu



Kirill Putnam, a food service coordinator with Sodexo, looks at his phone on the second floor of The Commons next to the air mattress he was sleeping on in the days after Hurricane Ida. Tulane University offered accommodations to essential workers during and after Hurricane Ida. (Photo by Rusty Costanza)

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida when essential workers such as doctors and nurses from Tulane hospital, food service staff, and campus recovery workers were working extended hours — and had no electricity at their own homes — they needed a cool and comfortable place to take a break and get some sleep.

Brian Johnson, associate vice president for campus operations; Donald Veals, manager of emergency preparedness and response; and Meredith Beers, manager of business continuity of operations, saw this pressing need and offered the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life with cots for sleeping, air conditioning for comfort and nutritious food to eat in the nearby Commons.

This was not the first time that the LBC was pulled into service as a place to get some shut-eye. Students living in Irby, Phelps, Wall and Paterson residence halls relocated to the LBC to shelter in place during Hurricane Ida's landfall.

After the storm passed but power outages remained, Johnson continued to be inventive and resourceful, helping to find temporary housing at Houston hotels and buses to transport 2,250 students to the Texas city. Approximately 700 Tulane students are currently staying in the Houston hotels until they return to campus.

Johnson also secured accommodations at a French Quarter hotel for a week to temporarily house teams from the Tulane University Police Department, Facilities Services, and other essential employees.

"Our essential personnel have worked tirelessly throughout the storm," said Johnson. "Being able to provide a place to rest and recover for these essential employees who give so much day in and day out is a critical element in the university supporting the amazing teams we have on ground."