

Subject: **Urgent* Austin Mexican Consulate will help Katrina displaced Mexicans annabelleart...

Mexico estimates 145,000 displaced by Katrina Official says deportation fears keeping victims in shadows By Juan Castillo

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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Citing Mexican government estimates that 145,000 Mexicans may have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina, Mexico's consul general in Austin said Tuesday that he fears many victims are not seeking help for fear of being deported.

Jorge Guajardo appealed to Mexican victims to come forward and seek help from Mexican consulates in the United States.

"We are here to offer assistance, economic assistance and assistance helping them get in contact with their relatives back in Mexico, many who are worried for their well-being," Guajardo said.

Mexican President Vicente Fox said last week that the United States agreed to not prosecute undocumented Mexican migrants affected by the hurricane who seek help from U.S. emergency officials.

Few Mexicans have sought help at shelters, Guajardo said, and only about 100 have sought aid from temporary consulates set up in Baton Rouge, La., and Mobile, Ala. Officials have confirmed four Mexican deaths from the hurricane.

Guajardo said estimates of Mexicans displaced in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi were based on the number of applications for matricula consulars, identification cards Mexico issues to its citizens living in the United States. Officials estimated that about 100,000 Mexicans were living in New Orleans alone.

In Austin, 10 to 15 people have sought assistance from the Mexican Consulate at 800 Brazos St. Guajardo said people who can prove they were hurricane victims receive Mexican government financial aid to help them get back on their feet, though he declined to disclose the amount.

Meanwhile, a Mexican navy ship was en route to New Orleans with aid, and a Mexican army convoy was to follow today. The aid includes all-terrain rescue vehicles and helicopters, a mobile hospital and kitchens, drinking water and 100 tons of food and medicine. Guajardo said Mexican soldiers would aid in search and rescue missions.

"These humanitarian missions are a reflection of the sentiments of solidarity of the people of Mexico with the U.S. population," Fox said during a televised address.

HOW TO GET HELP!!

Mexican victims of Hurricane Katrina may call (866) 600-2570 toll- free for help. Victims from Central Texas may also call the Mexican Consulate in Austin at 478-2866.