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HURRICANE SEASON HITS LOCAL FOOD BANK (Published October 2, 2004, in the Columbia Business Times) - 9/24/2004

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HURRICANE SEASON HITS LOCAL FOOD BANK

COLUMBIA, Mo. – The main effect on Columbia of hurricanes Ivan, Charley and Frances appears to be a shortage of food and manpower at the Central Missouri Food Bank.

Executive Director Peggy Kirkpatrick said the food bank sent one of its drivers to help with disaster relief in Florida. Columbia's food bank is part of America's Second Harvest, a national network that calls upon other regions for help during a disaster.

"Major food manufacturers normally have a supply of food that they donate through their local food banks in their service area," she said. "When disasters hit, a lot of that food gets redirected to the disaster sites, so right now we have practically no food in our warehouse."

Vanda Easley, public affairs specialist for State Farm Insurance, said Ivan had brought about a third fewer claims than either Charley or Frances. In homeowner claims, she said Ivan brought the company 45,000, Frances 70,000 and Charley 71,000; in addition to Ivan's 6,800, Frances's 9,300 and Charley's 18,000 in auto claims. Because Ivan did not hit Louisiana, there was little direct impact on State Farm's five-state Central Zone, which has an operations center in Columbia, except for the dispatch to hurricane duty of 10 employees, one of whom was based in Columbia.

Contrary to popular thought, the hurricanes have not caused a price rally in building materials, said Brad Eiffert, co-owner and manager of Boone County Lumber. The heavy rains caused construction projects to shut down, and lumberyard managers in other parts of the country are trimming inventories for winter, when business usually slows down.

"Last week, we had huge erosion in most forest products values; we just really saw a large downturn in a number of different species of products -- a deterioration in values of 10

percent or more in some cases," Eiffert said. "In the whole southeast, south central, east and northeast, construction stopped because of the rain. Roofing products are the only products showing pricing strength."

With three hurricanes down, and Jeanne now threatening the East Coast, it has been quite a season. But Kirkpatrick said she is proud to help the hurricane-stricken areas. "In 1993, the food bank network was there for us," Kirkpatrick said. "We received millions of pounds of food from all over the United States, and we never paid a dime for it, didn't even have to pay transportation for it. So it's our turn to give back in ways we can."

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