Help line offers recovery answer; Operators provide agency referrals

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Louisiana residents displaced by the 2005 hurricane season may call a new help line set up by a coalition of nonprofits and government agencies to provide answers about rebuilding efforts, schools, health care, pending legislation and other critical issues.

Operators at a new call center are ready to answer the calls 24 hours a day at (877) LA-REBUILDS, or 527-3284.

"This is one more tool to help us reach out to Louisiana people and to welcome them home," said Norman Francis, chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, in a statement.

The help line was set up for residents who don't have access to the Internet or simply prefer to speak to someone on the phone, Francis said.

The call center is run by Calls Plus, a company formerly based in New Orleans and owned by a local woman who relocated to Lafayette after the floodwaters left many of her employees homeless.
A call to the help line Wednesday evening was answered directly by an operator, who said she is able to answer an array of rebuilding questions or transfer callers to the appropriate center, such as the state's registry for the "Road Home" program that will distribute aid to homeowners to rebuild.

The call center is paid for by a group of nonprofits, government agencies and donations and has operators fluent in Spanish, Vietnamese and several Chinese dialects.