Thanks so much, Nancy, for your very helpful remarks. Before I turn it over to our operator, Holly, to give us instructions on how to ask a question, I want to mention that we’re grateful to Becky Brantley of the Office of Disaster Relief in the Small Business Administration for being with us today to answer any questions that might come up related to the kind of assistance that SBA can provide. The SBA Disaster Assistance Program is the primary federal disaster assistance loan program for long-range recovery for private sector, non-agricultural disaster victims. Loans are available not only to businesses, but also to homeowners or renters to repair or replace disaster damages to real estate or personal property owned by the victim. Thank you, Becky.

Second, and for the third time, I want to mention again that if you have a question and you do not have a chance to ask it, you may send an e-mail message to the experts participating in our Wi$e Up project at experts@wiseupwomen.org. We’ve asked them to respond to questions from listeners on this particular call. I also want to remind our listeners that the audio and transcript versions of this call will be posted on the Wi$e Up Web site, www.wiseupwomen.org, as soon as we have reviewed them.
Now let me ask the operator, Holly, to give us instructions on how to ask a question.

Coordinator

One moment, please, for the first question.

J. Walstedt

Holly, do we have a question?

Coordinator

And our first question comes from Barbara Budde. Your line is open. One moment. Barbara, your line is open. Thank you.

B. Budde

Thank you. I’m wondering if someone from the Department of Labor can tell us how to access the Gulf States unemployment assistance. I’m in Texas, and we have both Rita and Katrina evacuees.

J. Shoholm

This is Jacqui Shoholm with the Department of Labor. I’m filling in for Deputy Assistant Secretary Mason Bishop. The answer to that question would be to go to our hurricane recovery Web site, and I’m going to pull up the URL right this second so I have it in front of me. Sorry, I should have already had that ready. What I can do is give it at the end of the call.
B. Budde  Okay.

J. Shoholm  If that would be better.

B. Budde  That’s fine.

J. Shoholm  Okay. That Web site has all the information about assistance available through the Department of Labor, but it also is a job-posting Web site where you can talk to a call center, get information about filing for unemployment, or actually post and search for a job.

B. Budde  Is the Web site the one that was given to us, www.agb.org?

J. Shoholm  It’s ajb.

B. Budde  Jb, okay.

J. Shoholm  Right. But I will get the more direct URL and provide it at the end of the call.

B. Budde  Okay. Thank you very much.
Coordinator

Thank you. Our next question comes from Nakia Hillary. Your line is open.

N. Hillary

Good afternoon. I just want to thank all of the experts and participants that contributed to today’s thought-provoking and informative discussion. As a proud Texan, I do embrace opportunity to help as many of the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One of the concerns that I’ve heard from some of the affected individuals that I’ve been speaking with are the barriers faced by families that are helping their relatives. As Miss Nancy Montoya mentioned today, it’s very important not to forget about our elderly. Some of my colleagues that are like myself, Generation Xers that are helping elderly relatives, the barriers that they face include culture, traditions and/or pride. Or sometimes these individuals or these relatives don’t want what they consider “younger children” to interfere with their financial decisions. However when they make decisions that are detrimental or what I’ve termed “financial fires,” these young Generation Xers have to fight the financial fires.

What I’d like to know is, based on the aforementioned facts in mind, how can families that are opening up their homes receive help? And secondly, how can these same families begin to open
communication with relatives about their financial decisions without appearing intrusive or disrespectful, based on cultural norms? And this question is posed to anyone that would like to answer it.

J. Walstedt  Do any of our speakers have an answer to that question? Nobody?

B. Neiser  Well, this is Brent Neiser at NEFE. I just think reaching out to area councils on aging might be, AARP, some of those that deal with intergenerational dialogue. There’s also a group called Generations United out of D.C. that is affiliated with AARP in some way, that may have some insights on their Web site. Again, it’s called Generations United, and it might be… I don’t know the URL right now. It might allow for some kind of guidance to open up those family discussions and conversations.

One thing you can do is to try to make sure that the elderly person is always honored, and with their life experience they have faced similar challenges and situations of decision-making earlier. And some of those go down to basic principles of fairness, right and wrong, what is legal, what is illegal, and in this new, faster-paced world, some of those nuances or those differences may not be as
clear. So finding ways to go back to core, moral, principal values can be a good foundation to begin that open dialogue.

[Editor’s note: The following resources offer additional advice on assisting aging parents with finances. The Colorado State University Cooperative Extension’s publication *Talking With and Assisting Elderly Parents with Finances* is online at [http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnha/ha0307.html](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnha/ha0307.html). The article “Aging with ease: There are ways to help elderly parents with their finances” is available from the Global Action on Aging ([http://www.globalaging.org/elderrights/us/ease.htm](http://www.globalaging.org/elderrights/us/ease.htm)). The book *Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Aging Parents: How to Help, How to Survive* by Claire Berman contains a chapter on finances.]

J. Walstedt  Thank you, Brent. Does anybody else have a comment on that? If not, Holly, could you, do we have another question?

Coordinator   Yes, we do. Ellen Yellin, your line is open.

E. Yellin   Okay, thank you. Every time you talk to FEMA or the SBA, first of all, it’s difficult to get through. And I’m an evacuee. I happen to be a CPA from New Orleans. It’s difficult to get through, but
not only that, you get conflicting advice. Is there any particular place to go to get criteria that FEMA and the SBA look at with loans, with money that they’re giving out, how this whole system works. I can’t find anything in one place, and I don’t think of myself as an idiot. So I’m wondering how people that don’t have technical expertise do this.

B. Brantley

This is Becky Brantley with SBA Disaster Assistance. And I appreciate the opportunity to answer your question. We’re a place where you can get information. If you’re available to go online, it’s at www.sba.gov. We also have— at the SBA disaster program— we have a call center so that if you had any questions regarding the disaster application process, you can call them. And that number is 1-800-659-2955. Now I recognize I’ve just given you a Web site and a phone number, but I also want to just generally try to answer your questions.

Generally speaking, it is that people rely first on their insurance and then an SBA loan for their uncompensated losses. Now if you were a victim and you apply to FEMA or you registered with FEMA, by the way you responded to the questions they could have referred you to a variety of federal agencies that may be able to assist you. If you had damage to your business and answered that
question affirmatively, you would have been automatically referred to SBA for the losses that you had to your business.

If you either lost [your home] or your home was damaged--your primary residence--as a result of the disaster, then your needs would have also been referred over to SBA. We send out an application package to the victims to complete. There are also--in the disaster-impacted areas--there are disaster recovery centers in every state and more opening up every day. There are FEMA representatives onsite and also SBA representatives onsite to answer any questions you may have. We have the listing of all the disaster recovery centers and their hours of operation also available on our Web site at www.sba.gov.

I’m sorry, if there’s a specific question you would like, I’ll be more than glad to try to answer it for you.

E. Yellin: Well, I mean, my specific questions are…it sounds like the person with a higher net worth is not going to get an interest-free loan. Is that correct?

B. Brantley: Well, the law says that if someone essentially has the financial capacity to recover from the disaster without the assistance of the
federal government, we can make a disaster loan to them but it’s at the higher interest rate. Now currently, the higher interest rate for home loans is a little bit over 5% and for those who don’t have what we call “credit available elsewhere,” it’s less than 3%. More than 95% of all the loans that we do in the disaster loan program at SBA are at the lower rate of interest.

E. Yellin Thank you very much. Okay, I have another question that relates to the IRS, a tax question.

J. Walstedt Go ahead.

E. Yellin Is that all right? For the person who’s lost their entire home, 12 feet of water in it and they know it’s going to have to be razed, how do you determine the fair market value of that house before the disaster when you didn’t have it on the market, so you don’t have an appraisal? How do you get what the IRS is going to accept for documentation because you know that return’s going to be audited? And I’m talking about a home that’s worth anywhere from a million to $2 million. This is very common in the New Orleans area. Maybe even $10 million, depending [on where] the home is. They don’t have any documentation. So how are you going to recreate something for the IRS?
J. Walstedt Robin, are you able to respond to that?

R. Taylor One, I will attempt to respond to it; then if anybody else has any suggestions, they can. But I would suggest contacting any local real estate agents that were in the area of the homes that were recently on the market within a reasonable time period of the disaster. Also, any tax assessor’s office records on the property could be used to get you in the ballpark.

E. Yellin That may or may not work in New Orleans. Some homes have been reassessed and may have a good fair market value. Some may have a valuation that’s based on their cost of 20 years ago.

J. Walstedt Ellen, perhaps one of our WiSe Up mentors will be able to weigh in with a further answer to your question. So why don’t we see, since the clock is running, whether we have additional questions.

Coordinator Yes, we do.

J. Walstedt Go ahead, Holly.

Coordinator Sandra Gibson, your line is open.
Hello. I have three quick questions. First question is for Department of Labor. I am a self-employed CPA. I’ve been displaced from St. Bernard Parish. I turned in my Schedule C because I was on extension until October 15; however I went ahead and filed my income tax return for 2004. And I’m only getting the $98 minimum payment where I know that I qualify for the $258. The One-Stop unemployment office said that everyone who is self-employed is only getting the disaster $98 weekly. And my question is, first of all, is that correct information? And, secondly, when will we be updated to the $258, of course pending income verification? Is there any timeframe on that? The $98 a week isn’t even paying my self-employed health insurance.

Yes. This is Jacqui Shoholm again. I would say that things are changing so rapidly in terms of recent legislation that’s passed as a result of the disasters that the local One-Stop folks might not even be aware of new provisions. So number one, I would urge you, if it’s possible, to get to the Internet to look at the DOL Web site. And this is for the previous question as well. The URL is www.dol.gov and once you get to that site, you will see that there is a toll-free number if you want to talk to a person and submit a specific question. But also it will give you an idea of all of the
assistance that DOL is [providing] and the information that we’re
trying to get out to states and localities. Secondly, I would urge
you to try to talk to someone at the state level about your
unemployment insurance questions because there was some
legislation passed very recently, and we have not even cleared the
guidance for implementing that legislation yet. It provides that
disaster unemployment insurance can be provided to even
individuals who had no employment history prior to the hurricane.
In any event, you would qualify for those benefits.

S. Gibson And how do you get in touch with someone at the state level?

J. Shoholm I would call the toll-free number that’s on our Web site and ask
them who the appropriate person to talk to at the state level in
Louisiana would be.

S. Gibson Okay. Could you give that number out?

J. Shoholm I sure can. It’s 1-866-4-USA-DOL.

S. Gibson Okay. It’s very frustrating to see someone who is a W-2 employee
at $21,000 getting the maximum $258, and I’m a self-employed
individual going above my Social Security wage base in income and I’m getting $98 a week.

J. Shoholm Well, exactly. And I’m not an unemployment insurance expert, but I think that that may be under the regular state unemployment insurance rather than the disaster unemployment assistance.

S. Gibson Well, the director at the office did tell me that was the disaster assistance.

J. Shoholm Okay.

S. Gibson Okay. Well, I’ll try that. My second question--and this is again a quick question for the SBA specialist--is there any intention to extend the due date on the filing of those loan applications? I realize it’s September 30. I just got my application in the mail this week and am still trying to plant myself in an apartment and haven’t even gotten to take a look at that. I’m just concerned about the October 28 deadline.

B. Brantley And I can appreciate that. The following deadline--we actually follow FEMA’s deadlines--and it’s, generally speaking, originally 60 days. It is my personal expectation that that filing deadline will
probably be extended; however, we recognize that for a lot of our
customer base, that filling out a long application is not the top
priority right now. So we’re going to be flexible with our
applicants. I would encourage you to fill it out when you can but
recognize that although the filing period has not changed at this
point, it is my personal feeling that it probably will be extended
just as filing deadlines have been extended in the past.

But the important thing is to file that application because we can’t
help you unless you apply.

S. Gibson  Well, I guess, as a CPA, I’m kind of in tune with details and I
could fill it out in general terms, but it’s not going to be as accurate
as I would like it to be. So that’s where I’m kind of just trying to
work through that. I guess it’s a personal thing but I don’t want to
--.

B. Brantley  Well, I can understand that. And also recognize that--since one of
the forms in that package is actually an IRS 8821 form, which we
ask everyone to submit and that’s a taxpayer release--we have an
arrangement with IRS to get expedited service so that we’re able to
-- because we recognize disaster victims, generally speaking, are
not going to have copies of their tax returns.
S. Gibson: Right.

B. Brantley: And so we get that information directly from the IRS on an expedited basis in speaking with SBA, the loan officer is who will have gotten that information. If you would like to have us send you a copy of that, of your own return --.

S. Gibson: Well, I have…actually, I evacuated with my computer towers that have my clients’ tax information on it, but of course it doesn’t have assets and liabilities. It only has income and expenses, so anyway, thank you for that answer.

And my last question is to the specialist, the IRS specialist. I actually-- while you were on the call and giving out this information--went to the irs.gov Web site. I looked at the “What’s Hot” section and also at the news release section, and I did not see these specific things that you were referring to. Can you tell me a little more directly where to find that information about these disaster tax law changes, please?

R. Taylor: On the front page of irs.gov, there’s a link to Katrina tax relief information.
S. Gibson Right.

R. Taylor And if you would look for --.

S. Gibson The one that says, “Help for hurricane victims?”

R. Taylor Yes.

S. Gibson Okay.

R. Taylor Look for HR 3768 and all the information pertaining to Katrina.

S. Gibson HR 3768, okay.

R. Taylor HR 3768.

S. Gibson Okay.

J. Walstedt Thank you, Becky and Robin and Sandra. I think we’re going to have to move on to give other people a chance to ask a question. We are going to extend the call for up to 15 minutes so that more
people get a chance to ask their questions if there are additional questions. Holly, do we have another question?

Coordinator Yes. Debra Driscoll, your line is open.

D. Driscoll Thank you. I was just hoping to hear from Meloni or Nancy. When you talk about people needing to keep cash available, I really like the idea of the different locations. But what amount? Do you have a ballpark for like how many days of supplies people might need to purchase? Any ideas on that?

M. Hallock This is Meloni. In your car, you obviously need enough to pay for a tank of gas and food that you might be able to buy or water on the way. So depending on your vehicle, it’s probably $50 to $100. At home or at work it depends on the number of people that you’re needing to be responsible for. But in general, you ought to have at least enough to cover three days, three days to a week. Now for my kids, well, they were in college. It was their lunch money tomorrow, but in general, keep at least $100.

D. Driscoll Great. Thank you.
N. Montoya And I would have to say that a lot of it depends on what your risk tolerance is. I mean, I absolutely agree with Meloni, just in terms of the basics. But some people are more comfortable with stockpiling for a month, especially if you’re stubborn and you’re not planning on leaving.

Given my experience, I would certainly in terms of food and water be looking for a minimum of seven days.

D. Driscoll Okay, thanks.

N. Montoya Just because you just never know how long it’s going to take.

J. Walstedt Okay --.

D. Driscoll Okay, thank you.

J. Walstedt Holly, do we have another question?

Coordinator Lindsey Torbett, your line is open. Lindsey Torbett, your line is open. Please check your mute button.

L. Torbett Hello?
J. Walstedt  Hello? We hear you.

L. Torbett  Okay, all right. Sorry about that. I had a question in terms of the HR 3768. Does it apply to victims of the Hurricane Rita disaster?

R. Taylor  This one specifically applies to Hurricane Katrina. This act was passed specifically for that disaster.

L. Torbett  All right.

J. Walstedt  Do you know, Robin, is there something similar being considered for Rita?

R. Taylor  I would assume so, but I’m not positive at this point in time.

J. Walstedt  I went on the Congress Web site and there were numerous, numerous bills introduced to provide relief for hurricane victims and all I did was enter U.S. Congress as a search term. [Legislative information can be found at http://thomas.loc.gov/. Enter Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita as a search term.] That might tell you what’s in the hopper. Holly, do we have another question?
Coordinator  Debra Golding, your line is open.

D. Golding  Hello. This is Debra Golding. I’m also with the Department of Labor and just wanted to highlight one additional type of relief that’s been put out by the Department. I’m with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, and the information I’m talking about is also on the page that a number of others have mentioned -- www.dol.gov and the Hurricane Katrina page.

What we did in working with the IRS was extend the timeframe to help workers and their family members who are covered by group health plans and disability plans and pension plans who were encountering problems in exercising rights under their health plan such as COBRA elections or filing or perfecting benefit claims in their health or retirement plans. And so the timeframes have been extended to January 3, basically freezing the time period between August 29, 2005, and January 3, 2006.

So for more information, it’s on our Web site, and also, we have a toll-free number where you can talk to a benefits advisor in your region who could answer more specific questions. And I can give out that number. It’s 1-866-444-3272.
J. Walstedt  Thank you so much, Debra. Holly, do we have another question?

Coordinator  Joyce Crowell, your line is open.

J. Crowell  Yes. We were wondering what we would do in the case of a nuclear power plant terror attack.

J. Walstedt  Does anybody have a response to that?

J. Crowell  We’re vulnerable to the attack since we have the largest nuclear plant in the country and we don’t know that there has been any preparedness made for the citizens in the state of…actually, the Phoenix area.

B. Neiser  This is Brent Neiser from NEFE. Are you calling from Phoenix?

Questioner  Yes.

J. Crowell  Yes.

B. Neiser  After the September 11 attacks in the early part of the Homeland Security initiatives, local and state governments were to identify critical infrastructure, and yours is right at the top of the list.
J. Crowell

Yes.

B. Neiser

And they will have--as part of a disaster plan, if it’s up to date--a way to address that in some manner. And basically, they’ve been receiving funding hopefully for dealing with that kind of issue. Now part of it was initially to deal with security issues of information on Web sites, maps about the site, photos, things like that. And those usually have been taken down. But in terms of how the local community would respond, I would start with your state or local emergency office of preparedness and ask them that direct question. What are the plans in this area?

If that doesn’t work, you might consider going to your FEMA region for whatever region it is out in the west. But there should be-- and then the governor’s office would be someone or their assistant with emergency management or security, which might even be part of the National Guard, would be places to look.

That should be considered. Now how they’ve informed the public, I don’t know, in terms of evacuation.
J. Crowell  You know, see, that’s what I’m wondering. Because I-10 farther out west is only two lanes going east and going west so we’d have a real problem getting out of the city here in Phoenix.

B. Neiser  Any kind of radiological attack deals with prevailing winds at the time, which change, and certainly they can be very intense in the valley out there where you are. But they’ve certainly tried to address it from a security point of view to mitigate the chances of infiltration or attack or an accident through a plane diving in there or something like that.

J. Walstedt  Thanks so much, Brent. Holly, do we have another question?

Coordinator  Dorothy Witherspoon, your line is open.

D. Witherspoon  Thank you. We have an actual victim, or survivor, from the hurricane here with a question.

Questioner  Okay, my question is if a person had direct deposit to a local credit union and left without means of checks or debit card or anything to withdraw the funds from the account, how can the person get the funds?
J. Walstedt  Nancy, can you answer that?

N. Montoya  That’s a very good question. I guess the first question I would have for you is have you tried contacting the credit union? Are they up and running and available?

Questioner  No, they’re not.

N. Montoya  The national credit union--I’m going to get on the Internet right now and find the number for them--would be my next recommendation--the National Credit Union Association--and see if they have any information on the financial institution itself now. I’m not quite sure where you’re at, but if you choose to go in and you have enough identification, you might, and you’re willing to open....are you looking at relocating?

Questioner  Yes.

N. Montoya  Okay. Whatever financial institution you choose to work with, as long as you give them the information, they may be able to run interference for you with your credit union and be able to get an electronic transfer of those funds and close the account
electronically. I don’t know for a fact, but that might be another option.

Are you having any identification problems or did you bring adequate identification to open a new account?

**Questioner** Yes, I have adequate identification. It’s just that there was no checks.

**N. Montoya** Okay. I’m in the same situation; believe me. And you know, in some ways…but you didn’t bring a debit card or an ATM card or anything like that, is that correct?

**Questioner** Correct.

**N. Montoya** Okay.

**J. Walstedt** Nancy, we do have the 800number for the National Credit Union Association.

**N. Montoya** Okay, great. I was just now looking at that on the Internet. So that would be my next step, because they may be suffering from communications problems right now and that is their…the
National Credit Union Administration program…if they are a part of that, they will be in contact with them and will know what that particular situation is and they’re their regulator. So it’ll be easier for you to work with them in terms of getting that information.

But I would try it two-fold. I would try and work through the credit union administration and then I would also go to your new financial institution and explain what your situation is because if you’ve got the routing numbers and all the information…did you bring any kind of checking number or routing number?

Questioner I just have the account number. That’s it.

N. Montoya Okay, well your account number should also have your routing number, so that’s really good. You can bring that in and they may be able to work with you on that.

Questioner All right. Another question similar to this one. But let’s say the person does have a … card.

J. Walstedt Let’s just give the phone number for the National Credit Union Administration. It’s 1-800-827-6282. Do you have access to a computer?
Questioner: Yes.

J. Walstedt: Okay. The Web site is [website].

N. Montoya: I’m looking on the Web site right now. They do have a button to click specifically for credit union members affected by Katrina and there are several options that will help you get through that phone system as I’m looking at it.

Questioner: Okay. Thank you.

J. Walstedt: Holly, do we have another question?

Coordinator: Rose Kemp, your line is open.

R. Kemp: Hello. I have two quick questions. One is for IRS and the other one is for ETA. The question I have for IRS is that when you talked about the Earned Income Tax Credit, is it possible for someone to get what tax they may be entitled to very quickly or do they have to wait until some time next year when the tax returns are filed? [The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), sometimes called the Earned Income Credit (EIC), is a refundable federal]
income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return. For more information on the EITC, visit www.irs.gov/eitc.

R. Taylor For the Earned Income Credit you would have to wait until the 2005 return is filed.

R. Kemp But they can get it all at one time once it’s filed. Is that correct?

R. Taylor That’s correct.

R. Kemp Okay. Well, thank you very much. Now the other question I have is for ETA. And very early on, the first speaker mentioned that there was $12 million available to train workers in community colleges for specific training. The question I have is will monies be available for states like, say Missouri. Now Missouri has taken on a tremendous number of families from the affected areas. Will they be able or have they gotten funds to be able to train those dislocated workers in community colleges for specific training?
J. Shoholm At this point in time, I don’t believe that Missouri has qualified for national emergency grant funding. However, they may have other funding from our Department for community college training. And an additional thing that we’re doing is, in the very early stages, we are in the very early stages of a partnership with the Sloan Foundation, which is sponsoring one free semester of online training to anyone that was affected by the hurricanes at over 600 colleges across the country. So that would be open to any states, the host states and the disaster area states.

J. Walstedt That’s wonderful, Jacqui. I think we have time for one more question. Holly, do we have another question? Holly?

Coordinator Yes. Bobbie Shaffett, your line is open.

B. Shaffett Yes, I have the same question about the IRS tax relief that Robin had mentioned. And I’ve been searching the entire time and cannot find that. The HR 3768, is that what you said? How could we find those things that you had mentioned?

J. Walstedt Robin?

R. Taylor Yes.
J. Walstedt  Oh, okay.

R. Taylor  You went to the Web site and looked under the Katrina relief information?

B. Shaffett  I did. I’ve looked under everything and I didn’t see the things that you had mentioned anywhere.

R. Taylor  If it’s possible, then I can send this information out via e-mail.

B. Shaffett  Yes, that would be great. Do you have an e-mail and I could just, then you could just reply?

R. Taylor  Yes. It’s robin.taylor@irs.gov.

B. Shaffett  How do you spell Taylor?


B. Shaffett  Okay.