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U.S. Treasury Urges Waiver of ATM Surcharges for Katrina Evacuees

The U.S. Department of the Treasury is requesting that depository institutions refrain from imposing ATM surcharges on Hurricane Katrina evacuees who use the FEMA Assistance Card to obtain cash from ATMs. The FEMA Assistance Card is a MasterCard-branded debit card that is being issued by Treasury in order to provide Katrina evacuees with access to FEMA benefits.

The FEMA Assistance Card may be used to make point-of-sale purchases at any merchant that accepts MasterCard, and may also be used to withdraw funds from an ATM through use of a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Cardholders may already use the card without incurring a surcharge at any ATM participating in the Allpoint network, and at any ATM owned by JP Morgan Chase, the card issuing bank, including Bank One locations. In light of the urgent need of Katrina evacuees for access to funds for purchasing basic needs, Treasury is urging all other depository institutions to voluntarily waive surcharges at other ATMs where the card can be used. Banks and ATM owners should contact their card associations, network providers or processors for information necessary to identify these cards.

On September 1, 2005, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the National Credit Union Administration, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, and the Office of Thrift Supervision (the agencies), and the Conference of State Bank Supervisors asked insured depository institutions to consider all reasonable and prudent steps to help meet the critical financial needs of their customers and communities affected by Hurricane Katrina. The agencies stated that such actions may include waiving ATM fees for customers and non-customers.