

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [CEO Hotline](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/
Library](#)

► [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Retirement
Round-up](#)

Metro Info

► [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)

► [Org Chart](#) (pdf)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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PHOTO: SHANTAY IOSIA



Metro Rail TOS Lorraine Lomax, right, and her family have pitched in to help Jamaican victims of Hurricane Ivan. From left are Lomax's niece Kai Snowden, 5; sister Stephanie Snowden and mother Elaine Mumby.

Metro's Lorraine Lomax Is Helping Jamaica's Hurricane Victims

By SHANTAY IOSIA

(Oct. 12, 2004) Thousands of Jamaicans remain without homes, food or electricity after Hurricane Ivan tore through the island, battering the capital, Kingston, and leveling towns and villages along its southern coast.

Metro's Lorraine Lomax has joined the relief efforts to assist many who have lost everything and are searching to rebuild again.

"They are really suffering and trying to do the best they can," says Lomax, a rail transit operations supervisor for the Metro Blue Line. "They don't have insurance or hurricane relief so they have to cover all the damages themselves."

Jamaica's warm Atlantic shores and high humidity makes it susceptible to hurricanes, something the residents have grown accustomed to.

'Just weren't prepared'

"We get a lot of hurricane warnings between July and September. Almost every six or seven days," says Lomax, a native of the island. "When they heard it was coming, they just weren't prepared for it."

Hurricane Ivan is the largest hurricane so far this season with winds that reached 155 mph. The rains continued weeks after Hurricane Ivan ventured southward, sparing Jamaica's northern shores and stagnant economy.

Families returned to their homes on the southern coast to find uprooted trees, vanished roads, razed buildings, smashed boats and vehicles washed into nearby streams and bodies of water – more damage than the devastation from Hurricane Gilbert in 1988.

Inflated prices

Most of the families now live in dome tents pitched on empty lots that once housed stores and shops. Families are no longer able to produce their own crops because of the drenched soil and cannot afford the inflated prices of goods in the surviving stores.

Lomax, along with her mother, Elaine Mumby, and sister, Stephanie Snowden, prepared lunches and raised almost \$800 for those in need.

"This is what life is all about, helping others because I don't need help right now," says Mumby. "But when my time comes, it makes a difference. I'm going to get all this back, from people I may not even know."

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