

Relief Web sites show huge Sept. upswing

October 31 2005

Americans reached out and logged on during a turbulent September to help their fellow citizens.

Battered by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the U.S. Gulf Coast region was given a boost by Americans across the country through donations, volunteerism and other gestures of support -- often shown online. According to the latest monthly analysis from comScore Media Metrix, visitation to sites offering relief and assistance to victims reached unprecedented levels in September 2005.

"The Internet's role in these disasters has been multi-dimensional," said Peter Daboll, president and CEO of comScore Media Metrix. "Human outreach in the wake of these disasters has proven that the Internet is truly a community of communities, bringing together people and services to play critical roles in the process of recovery and rejuvenation."

The American Red Cross site, RedCross.org, saw 9.6 million visitors in September -- more than five times the amount of traffic it saw in August 2005 -- making it the highest-gaining property for the month. The second-highest gaining property was FEMA.gov, the Web home of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA had 4.9 million visitors in September 2005, a 369-percent increase from August traffic totals. Beyond major government and relief organization sites, many Americans visited smaller, "grassroots" sites to aid in hurricane relief. The highest-gaining category in terms of growth was religion, which climbed 10 percent to reach 14.9 million unique visitors in September.

Religion sites became destinations for those looking to help others as well as themselves, as daily commentaries, audio broadcasts and e-greetings were popular destinations at these sites.

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