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Sentinel

County Employees Claim They Were Underutilized

County government "vastly underutilized" its employees during the disaster, union members are saying in the wake of being told they will not be paid for the four days that general county services were interrupted last week.

Local 415 Manager Jerry Zellhoefer said it is the union's belief that county administrators and the Board of Supervisors made a mistake in sending so many employees home and that overall, "They vastly underutilized the county force."

His statement was backed up today with a press release from 90 social service workers who say they were sent home at a time when there was a great need for their services.

"As trained, competent social service employees we are outraged at the county's decision not to compensate its employees for the time we were locked out (and) there are a number of serious

questions confronting us that we want you (county board) to address:

"As social service employees are the best equipped group to deal with disaster victims' immediate needs. Why weren't we utilized to serve the public during the flood?"

Employees point out the county had budgeted the salary money and that workers now have to make up the work that piled up from Jan. 5-8.

"Many social service workers, assuming that they would be needed to provide emergency services, showed up for their jobs (and) most all of the workers who did brave the ruins and managed to arrive were not allowed to work," the 90 employees say.

Workers say that since the disaster and return to work they have to see as many as 22 families a day to make up for the missed work and to handle the additional workload caused by the storm and flood.