

## **Logistics News: Organization Provides Platform for Supply Chain and Logistics Professionals to Contribute Skills and Resources in Times of Crisis**

### **American Logistics Aid Network Seeks to Connect Need to Capabilities and Interest when Emergencies Arise; On-Going Call for Professionals to Join the Network**

**SCDigest Editorial Staff**

"Social Networking" is taking on many new and interesting forms across all areas of business and society, and we were recently pleased to be introduced to an innovative example that seeks to help the US better respond to any number of potential natural disasters or other crises.

The massive problems associated with Hurricane Katrina in 2005 caused many to consider how the supply chain and logistics industry might be able to apply skills and resources to help the country better respond to future emergencies.

**John "Jock" Menzies**, chairman of trucking and logistics company The Terminal Corporation in Baltimore, went down to New Orleans for a week shortly after Katrina to see the problems first hand. He used that experience to make a presentation at the CSCMP conference that year on what the logistics challenges were after such a disaster, and soliciting ideas on what might be done.

That ultimately led in 2007 to the birth of the [American Logistics Aid Network](#) (ALAN), of which Menzies serves as president.

The basic idea: connect organizations at a local level that have a need for logistics or supply chain support, often associated with a disaster or crisis, with people or companies that have skills, materials or resources that can help.

A simple example: after a natural disaster, as food and supplies come in, the local area often needs warehouse space to store the goods; it may often require refrigerated space, even tougher to find in a pinch. Someone in the region may have or be willing to make available such storage capacity.

***A simple example: after a natural disaster, as food and supplies come in, the local area often needs warehouse space to store the goods; it may often require refrigerated space, even tougher to find in a pinch***

---

Today, how would they find each other?

Currently, the ALAN organization is still somewhat in its infancy. Its web portal, interestingly, uses the Aidmatrix platform that was originally based on some of the e-commerce work that software vendor i2 did in the early 2000s (e.g., FreightMatrix), but for this specific area was given to a non-profit called the [Aidmatrix Foundation](#). Some 32 states use the foundation's portal technology to link need and donors in other contexts, as do many other organizations, such as NATO.

The portal's main capability right now is for organizations to post a "need." People or companies/organizations that can help meet the need can respond.

That of course requires that people come to the site to see the posted needs. Menzies says they have some limited "push" type broadcasting now, but over time plan to have a more intelligent system that could for example send emails to individuals targeted for a specific need based on a pro-

## **Logistics News: Organization Provides Platform for Supply Chain and Logistics Professionals to Contribute Skills and Resources in Times of Crisis (Con't)**

file (geographic location, skills, resources, etc.).

There is no cost to "join" for organizations that might have needs or for companies/individuals that might be able to respond. ALAN's modest budget is met currently through some foundation grants and individual financial donations.

SCDigest expects ALAN's capabilities and portal to continue to expand, and believes it is an excellent way for supply chain/logistics practitioners and their companies to help out when an emergency or crisis hits the US.

