

Groupize for Government Coordinator Emergency Travel

SITUATION

After Hurricane Michael, the strongest storm on record in the Florida panhandle, made landfall, and then moved inland to Georgia and beyond, an entire region was suddenly in need of federal assistance and emergency services. With almost a million people without power and \$14.58 billion in damage, the unprecedented emergency meant there was no time to spare in securing hotel accommodations for displaced people, first-responders and federal aid workers. In addition, work crews needed to be moved site to site with minimal advance notice.

A daunting task, to say the least. A coordinator working on behalf of FEMA was charged with checking on hotels in 143 counties in Georgia and Alabama about rates and availability for 30-day time periods in October and November. Replies were required from hotels just five days after the initial landfall. Needless to say, the coordinator did not have the time or human resources to accomplish this without a sophisticated technology partner.

After implementing the Groupize platform, the coordinator was able to get bids out to almost 2,000 hotels in 37 affected regions within 48 hours. Hotels quickly responded

Groupize helped get bids out to:

2,000 hotels
in **37** affected regions
within **48** hours

with comprehensive offers that included availability, special rates, amenities and details of how to confirm the bookings. Hotel responses were sent not only to the coordinator point of contact by email, but were captured in the Groupize dashboard so that multiple collaborators could assist with the project. The tech platform also automatically followed up with all hotels that had not responded within 24 hours and then 72 hours.

An estimated 1,500 hours of staff work were saved by the use of Groupize. Without this technology, travel agents would have had to research and create a database of all hotels in 143 counties, contact each hotel and share their requirements with a sales manager verbally or by email or fax. A cumbersome process that could easily take 45 minutes per hotel. With Groupize, the coordinator was able to meet FEMA's timeline and its business parameters, while getting displaced families and aid workers into hotel rooms at a fast and efficient pace.



ESSENTIAL CAPABILITIES FOR URGENT TRAVEL

- Functionality to request all hotels in multiple counties at the same time
- A hotel database with current contact information for the sales manager or general manager
- An email response mechanism for hotels, allowing them to meet a request two-hour turnaround time
- Automation to track hotels that did not respond and automatically send a follow-up request at 24 and 72 hours
- Dashboard that captures communication between the coordinator and hotels, creating a comprehensive audit trail
- Affordable technology providing impressive ROI with time-saving
- Manage and assign rooms to crew members
- Communications engine with crew - email, text and direct message
- Provides duty of care for trips without air

TAKEAWAYS

When an emergency caused by a natural disaster hits, hundreds or thousands of hotel rooms are often needed for displaced people and aid workers. Travel agencies serving assistance efforts need to spring into action to secure hotels, often in multiple counties and regions.

By implementing the Groupize platform, travel agencies can contact hotels for rates and availability much more quickly than by reliance on traditional RFP technology or staff to call hotels directly. Hundreds of hours are saved for coordinator staff and rooms are secured much sooner for those who urgently need them.

Groupize allows planners of extended stays to shop, negotiate and manage bids from over 150,000 hotels worldwide, ensuring optimized savings. And because Groupize captures and centralizes all the critical details, organizers have full visibility and controls for comprehensive duty of care.

With capabilities that go beyond streamlining and sourcing to meet the needs of emergency situations, the platform is ideal for projects, teams, crews, utilities, government contractors or workforce management.