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Universal Continues 24-7 Operations Throughout Hurricane Ike and Recovery

Houston (Sept. 18, 2008) – As much of Houston still remains in the dark with no electricity and damaged infrastructure following Hurricane Ike, Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc., the recognized pioneer in trip support services for business aviation, has continued to operate 24 hours a day since the hurricane passed directly over its Houston headquarters Sept. 13.

“I am pleased to say that, through preparation and the unmatched dedication of our employees, we’ve been able to facilitate our complete workload of trips despite the devastation our area has endured,” said Universal® Chief Operating Officer Dave Diulus. “In fact, we’ve not only maintained operations but provided uninterrupted service despite taking a near direct hit from such a large and destructive hurricane.”

“Yesterday, we successfully handled 1,200 phone calls, which was one of our busiest days since July,” said Vice President of Trip Support Services Pete Lewis. “Our employees have overcome gas shortages, power outages, and damage to their own homes, but have still reported to work and made this entire event nearly transparent to clients.”

Since Ike made landfall in the early morning hours of Sept. 13, Universal® has handled the same number of legs per day (approximately 200-250) as it would under normal conditions. This was possible because of the company’s extensive Business Continuity Plan, explained Diulus.

“Being headquartered near the Gulf Coast means hurricanes and tropical storms, unfortunately, are a fact of life around here,” said Diulus. “However, we’ve prepared for just the type of situation that occurred with Ike and, thanks to careful planning, we were able to continue to provide seamless service to our clients while most of the upper Texas coast shut down.”

In preparation for Ike, per the plan, Universal® formed a hurricane Ride Out Team and Away Team of volunteer trip support specialists, IT personnel, meteorologists, as well as administrative personnel who ensured the team had food and accommodations on-site. While the Ride Out Team remained in Houston, the Away Team traveled to a secure off-site location away from the storm’s path to ensure continued operations should headquarters be forced to evacuate.

“The safety of our employees is always our first concern,” said Diulus. “All volunteer members of both teams were given time off beforehand to prepare and make the necessary arrangements for their families’ safety and to secure property. Furthermore, our headquarters is designed to withstand category 2 hurricanes.”

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Universal's headquarters itself is equipped with:

- backup generators
- various IT redundancies

All of these came in handy as commercial power has still (as of the date of this release) not been restored to the facility.

“In addition to our operational relocation in a secure off-site facility away from the storm's path, we also have an off-site hardened data center,” said Universal® Chief Information Officer, Lynda Parsons. “This secure co-location data center supports Universal's 24-7 global operations and is rated to handle a category 5 hurricane. With redundant power, generators, and telecommunications infrastructure, we feel confident our co-location facility is designed to withstand the turbulent Gulf hurricane season or any other disaster that could cause disruption to our headquarters' infrastructure.”

“The value of planning for this type of event cannot be overstated,” said Diulus. “Ike was a devastating storm to this region, but through proper planning, we were able to handle 1,500 to 1,700 international operations and counting since landfall. If anything, Ike just validated the years of planning we've gone through, not only in simulated scenarios, but also through other less destructive tropical threats to our region such as Tropical Storm Edouard, Hurricane Gustav and occasional localized flooding events. Most important to the execution of our plans, though, are our people, some of whom continued to facilitate clients' trips despite the being unsure of the status of their own homes.”

Currently, Universal® is continuing to recover from Ike, which damaged part of its headquarters facility. The company is expected to resume full operations at this facility in the near future, but until then, will continue to provide the services its clients expect, all according to the plan.

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At Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc., our goal is to become a vital extension of our clients' flight operations teams. Universal® offers a wide range of services designed to provide business aviation operators seamless service from start to finish. Universal's wide range of services includes flight planning, weather briefings, online tools, the UVair® Fueling Card, Universal Aviationsm worldwide ground support, UVdatalink® air-to-ground communication, and more. Universal has been facilitating successful trips for business aviation operators since 1959.

To learn more about Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc., e-mail sales@universalweather.com, or call (800) 231-5600 ext. 3300 (N. America Toll-Free) or (713) 944-1622 ext. 3300 (Worldwide).

*Universal: Success from the word **GO**.*