



Gulf Coast oil spill creates big business for Mobile's hotels, restaurants

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Kittrell)Workers in the Incident Command Room at the Mobile Convention Center coordinate efforts in fighting the oil spill Sunday, May 2, 2010. The influx of workers fighting the oil spill has led to a boom for Mobile's downtown hotels. While people who rely on the seafood and beach tourism industries anxiously wait to see how **the oil spill** affects their livelihoods, the disaster has brought new revenue for several Mobile businesses. Downtown hotels are filled by the hundreds of out-of-town workers helping to respond to the spill. Restaurants and bars are hopping at a time when much of their clientele normally heads to the beach. Car rental companies are bringing in truckloads of automobiles from other cities to meet demand.

For the city of Mobile, the influx of workers couldn't come at a better time. The City Council on Tuesday increased sales taxes by 1 cent, starting June 1, because the city expects a \$25 million budget deficit over the next year and a half.

See **continuing coverage of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill of 2010** on [al.com](#) and [GulfLive.com](#).

To keep track of the Gulf of Mexico oil slick, visit [www.skytruth.org](#) or follow its **Twitter feed**.

To see updated projection maps related to the oil spill in the Gulf, visit the **Deepwater Horizon Response** Web site established by government officials.

"Out of this disaster could be a little bit of economic benefit for us downtown," said Carol Hunter, a spokeswoman for the Downtown Mobile Alliance.

There has been a massive response - both officials and volunteers - to the Gulf Coast since the April 20 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig and subsequent oil spill.

More than 400 people, many from well owner BP PLC and several federal agencies, have set up an area command center at the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center downtown. Many of the workers appear to be staying at downtown hotels. "They're packed," Hunter said. "They're scrambling around to make it work."

Summer is normally the slow season in downtown Mobile, with school getting out and more people spending time at the beach, Hunter said.

Margo Gilbert, general manager of the Battle House Hotel, said hotel managers are working together to find rooms for everyone. No one knows exactly how long the relief workers will be staying just yet, she said.

"We're getting very close to being at capacity," she said.

David Mitchem, the general manager of Hertz Rent-a-Car in the Mobile area, said the company has seen a spike in reservations in the past week. It's been able to accommodate everyone so far, but the company is bringing in trucks of automobiles through the end of the week to make sure there are enough vehicles on hand.

"There's been quite a bit of demand with people flying in to the Mobile Air Center at Brookley and out here at the (Mobile Regional) airport," he said.

Most of the reservations have been for two weeks, he said.

How to help: Volunteers eager to help cope with the spill and lessen its impact on the Gulf Coast environment and economy.

HOW YOU CAN HELP will appear daily in the Press-Register until there is no longer a need for volunteers in response to the oil spill disaster. If you have suggestions for a story, or if you belong to an organization in need of such help, please call Press-Register Editor Mike Marshall at 251-219-5675 or email him at mmarshall@press-register.com.

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