



## NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration Responds to Hurricane Katrina

**T**he National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) is a federal leader in preparedness, response, damage assessment, and restoration for oil spills, chemical spills, and hazardous waste sites. As a natural resource trustee, OR&R's mission is to minimize harm to the environment during an incident response, and protect and restore coastal ecosystems. OR&R works with federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to develop best practices and decision-making tools for cleanup and assessment of oil spills and hazardous waste sites.

- Responding to 16 significant pollution incidents and conducting preliminary reconnaissance of spills.
- Conducting systematic offshore overflights to identify and document offshore sources of spilled oil.
- Preparing guidance and participating in planning to help minimize physical injury to shoreline habitats during vessel salvage.
- Preparing flood level maps of New Orleans.



Flooded street in New Orleans, Louisiana.

### Assessment and Restoration

OR&R assessment and restoration efforts included:

- Conducting shoreline cleanup assessments in Mobile to document the extent of shoreline oiling from sunken and stranded vessels.
- Coordinating efforts to collect data and understand the scope of natural resource impacts from oil spills and hazardous releases in the region.
- Collecting data that will provide pre-assessment information for the larger spill sites.



In their Seattle "war room," OR&R scientists coordinate efforts to respond and assess damage.

### OR&R Responds to Hurricane Katrina

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, OR&R provided invaluable scientific support to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in their response efforts. Over one year after the storm, OR&R continues to work on vessel salvage and wreck removal, and is assessing the extent and severity of marine debris in the offshore environment. OR&R and NOAA Restoration Center are also working with state and federal partners to assess the impacts to natural resources and to plan for restoration, within the context of the broader recovery efforts.

### Response

OR&R response efforts included:

- Assisting the USCG, EPA, and the states to identify, assess, prioritize, and mitigate nearly 400 reported releases of hazardous material, such as hundreds of stranded drums of unknown materials (<http://www.incidentnews.gov>).



Removal of damaged vessels from Mississippi and Alabama requires the efforts of more people than just the contractors who can remove the vessel from the water. Representatives from the Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Alabama, Navy Superintendent of Salvage, and NOAA meet at the entrance of Bayou La Batre in Alabama. Their mission is to coordinate the process of removing damaged vessels while also minimizing damage to the wetlands.

## **Marine Debris**

OR&R and NOAA's Office of Coast Survey are currently engaged in near-shore survey along the coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, in order to identify marine debris that can pose hazards to fishing and boating activities. OR&R, coordinating with states and local entities, leads the risk assessment process of the debris found. The offices involved will prioritize the removal of the debris; document the debris by using the survey data to generate a comprehensive set of GIS-based charts, showing location, size, priority, and other attributes of debris items; and will provide a Web site that includes the debris charts, as well as survey updates and links to pertinent information.

## **Rebuilding the Gulf in the Aftermath of Katrina**

NOAA is committed to restoring the Gulf Coast region by working with state, local, and federal agencies to facilitate improved spill prevention and preparedness through the development of updated tools and training activities. OR&R stands ready to work in conjunction with other NOAA programs and our natural resource trustee partners to assess resource injuries and develop and implement restoration options that address the contaminant impacts of Hurricane Katrina.

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*NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment*

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**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,  
please visit our Web site at**

**<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov> or call (301) 713-2989.**

