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REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR'S 300-DAY PLAN

Region 6 Employee News Journal

Front Lines Message from the Regional Administrator

Getting the Job Done — Together

As the long days of summer were coming to an end in late August, Region 6 was preparing to wrap up another successful year. Most of the commitments in our 300-Day Plan were on track, and planning was underway for the next fiscal year. Then, in the space of a few hours, everything changed.

We began responding to Hurricane Katrina knowing that the key to our success would be working with our partners to do whatever it takes to get the job done—a core principle of ours that has made us a leader in achieving environmental results. None of us could have imagined what getting the job done together would come to mean in the months since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita raged into the Gulf Coast. Just as those storms changed the landscape of the region, responding to the storms' damage has altered the way we had to perform our work.

During the first few days, we jumped into boats to rescue people stranded on rooftops. As the mission focus shifted to recovery, our staff moved quickly to assess conditions and collect hundreds of water and air samples. OSC's waded through flooded streets from dawn till dusk with men and women from LDEQ and FEMA. Staff crowded for hours around planning tables with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Corps of Engineers. Then, when they could work no more, they finally crawled into cots in LDEQ's conference rooms. All too soon they awoke, and they did it all again.

In the Regional Office, our people reviewed stacks of data and scores of e-mail messages. We spent more time in meetings and conference calls than we ever thought possible, racing against the clock to make the right decisions or to provide our partners and the public the information they needed. And when the evacuees needed to talk to someone about returning to their homes, our people spent hours upon hours on the telephone helping them understand the information available to them.

Since that stormy day in August, I've been to Louisiana nine times, and have seen, first-hand, the incredible devastation as I walked through muddy streets, met with our men and women working there, and slept in one of our trailers in Metairie. I've been proud to accompany Steve Johnson on several visits there, and to introduce him to our extended EPA family—volunteers from EPA Regional Offices in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and elsewhere. We were moved by the hardships our people have willingly taken on, and the professionalism they are showing in the face of adversity. The Administrator has shared with me how impressed he is with the people of EPA, and the excellent relationships we are building with our partners.



Members of the multi-agency response team

Now five months since Katrina's landfall, we've helped communities restore drinking water and wastewater systems, we've cleaned spills, and we've made sure that our Superfund sites are secure. Our focus now is to continue to monitor and report on environmental conditions, help determine how to dispose of the mountains of debris left behind by the storm, assist in evaluation of demolition efforts, and complete other recovery work. In the days and weeks ahead we will continue to collaborate closely with our federal, state, and local partners to find the best possible solutions, and we will succeed in getting the job done — together.



Regional Administrator Greene joined Administrator Johnson during a recent visit to Louisiana.