

Failure of complete evacuations led to preventable deaths, great suffering, and further delays in relief

Summary

Evacuation is a critical part of emergency preparation for a hurricane. Such preparation includes both detailed evacuation planning and implementation of the evacuation plan in potentially affected areas once a hurricane is projected to make landfall. The states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and many of their localities (e.g., New Orleans) have hurricane evacuation plans and years of experience implementing them.

In Alabama and Mississippi, the state or localities declared mandatory evacuations as Hurricane Katrina approached, and implementation of their evacuation plans went relatively well. In Louisiana, the state and local implementation of evacuation plans for the general population also went well, resulting in one of the largest emergency evacuations in history.

Two of Louisiana's most populous localities, New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, declared mandatory evacuations late or not at all. While the definition of

“mandatory” evacuation and the associated obligations and liabilities that local governments assume are still being debated, early designation of the evacuation of New Orleans as mandatory could have increased the number of people that left, resulting in a more complete evacuation, saving lives, and reducing suffering. New Orleans city officials, who were responsible for executing an evacuation plan and who had the authority to commandeer resources to assist in the evacuation, failed to evacuate or assist in the evacuation of more than 70,000 individuals who did not leave either before the announcement of the mandatory evacuation or before the storm hit. Those who did not evacuate included many who did not have their own means of transportation. Despite the declaration of a mandatory evacuation on Sunday before landfall, New Orleans officials still did not completely evacuate the population. Instead, they opened the Superdome as a “shelter of last resort” for these individuals.

Problems sheltering this population, beyond emergency planners' general preference for evacuation, were exacerbated by inadequate preparations for a large population at the Superdome. For those with medical or special needs, New Orleans and other institutions also failed to evacuate them, but instead sheltered them — a decision that also had negative consequences and is discussed in detail in the MEDICAL CARE chapter. Those

individuals in all states who had the means to evacuate, but did not do so, must also share the blame for the incomplete evacuation and the difficulties that followed.

The failure of a more complete evacuation led to catastrophic circumstances when Katrina made landfall, particularly in New Orleans where the force of the hurricane breached the levee system in multiple locations throughout the metropolitan area. As the resulting floodwaters spread through low lying urban areas,



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thousands of people who were trapped in their homes climbed to their roofs or fled into flooded streets. Fortunately, thousands of these people were saved by a massive and heroic search and rescue effort. But many were not as fortunate, and hundreds of people

died in their homes or other locations, presumably from drowning. Those who were in the Superdome, or those that found shelter and high ground at other locations, suffered horrible conditions. The floodwaters, which had been anticipated and even predicted from a large hurricane such as Katrina, furthered the misery and delayed the immediate relief of the remaining population.

The incomplete evacuation and floodwaters also required a post hurricane evacuation, for which federal, state, and city officials had not prepared. Because of a lack of preparations, planning had to be accomplished in emergency circumstances, where communications and situational awareness were in short supply. Requirements for buses kept growing as a lack of willing drivers and diversions of buses continued to delay the evacuation of the Superdome and other locations. Finally, the combination of more buses and supplemental airlifts resulted in a complete evacuation of New Orleans.

Finding: Evacuations of general populations went relatively well in all three states

Evacuation is a critical part of emergency preparation for a hurricane

Because of the destructive forces of hurricanes, evacuation planning is very important. Preparation for an approaching hurricane includes both detailed evacuation planning and implementation of that plan in potentially affected areas once a hurricane is projected to make landfall. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials told

Select Committee staff that emergency planners prefer evacuation to sheltering people within affected areas because the sheltered population is subject to the most intense dangers of the storm and because it may be a slow and difficult operation to get relief personnel and supplies back into hurricane ravaged areas.

The state of Louisiana has an evacuation plan, which was revised following Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The evacuation for that storm had caused massive traffic jams leading out of New Orleans. Those traffic jams were



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the result of the southernmost parishes trying to evacuate at the same time as Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, the two most populous parishes. The new plan called for a staged evacuation with the southernmost parishes evacuating first, followed by Lower Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, and then

Upper Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, facilitated by the implementation of contraflow (one-way outbound traffic) on the highways leading out of New Orleans.¹

In addition to the Louisiana state plan, local governments have emergency evacuation plans. The City of New Orleans Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan ("New Orleans Plan") provides: "The authority to order the evacuation of residents threatened by an approaching hurricane is conferred to the Governor by Louisiana statute."² But this power "is also delegated to each political subdivision of the State by Executive Order."³

The New Orleans Plan further explains: "This authority empowers the chief elected official of New Orleans, the Mayor of New Orleans, to order the evacuation of the parish residents threatened by an approaching hurricane."⁴ Under this authority, the Mayor of New Orleans is responsible for giving the order for a mandatory evacuation and supervising the actual evacuation of his population. The Mayor's Office of Emergency Preparedness must "[c]oordinate with the State . . . on elements of evacuation"

and “[a]ssist in directing the transportation of evacuees to staging areas.”⁵

The importance of evacuations is expressed in the New Orleans Plan: “The safe evacuation of threatened populations . . . is one of the principle reasons for developing a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.”⁶ In furtherance of that goal, “[t]he city of New Orleans will utilize all available resources to quickly and safely evacuate threatened areas.”⁷

Mississippi also has a state evacuation plan, one that takes account of local plans because of the key role that counties play in declaring evacuations. According to the testimony of the Director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Robert Latham, the authority to make decisions about mandatory evacuations in Mississippi rests with local governments.⁸ However, the state is generally included in any discussions about evacuation orders because, once a city or county chooses to make such an order, state responsibilities for managing traffic (including contraflow) and opening shelters can come into play.⁹ In preparing for Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi officials worked through the MEMA liaisons it dispatched to the counties along or near the Gulf Coast as well as a representative it had stationed in Louisiana’s emergency operations center (because of contraflow agreements between Mississippi and Louisiana that provide for evacuations out of southeast Louisiana through Mississippi).¹⁰

Alabama also has an evacuation plan and recently revised it. Lessons learned during Alabama’s response to Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis helped refine the state’s actions as Katrina neared. Having been criticized for triggering evacuations that turned out to be unnecessary, Alabama officials practiced to reduce the time required to reverse traffic flows on the major routes and encouraged



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county and local officials to define smaller evacuation zones within their jurisdictions to better target evacuation actions. According to Governor Riley:

On Katrina there was an evacuation plan that was a little more moderate than I had hoped for, and we convinced everyone in the room to expand it. The time before, as I said earlier, we got some criticism because we may have expanded it too much. We have gone back and built a zone type process. But we take all of the local team, because you have to have local buy-in because it won’t work if you don’t.¹¹

Alabama state and county officials testified that one of their difficulties in planning evacuations is that Army Corps of Engineers data used as the basis for evacuation plans and models is outdated. According to Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) Director Bruce Baughman:

The two coastal counties have had studies done by the [Army] Corps of Engineers. Those studies were about five years old. In the case of Mobile County, the data did not include the windfields. So it doesn’t give you complete information when you are trying to make decisions on clearance times . . . [I]t is based upon dated information. Baldwin County has grown by leaps and bounds so that you have got a higher population. And not only that, before Labor Day, you have got probably 100,000 people . . . as far as outside individuals that are tourists down in that area, and that is not computed into your clearance



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times. What we have done is we have taken the data that is available that is between 22 and 24 hour clearance times for those two counties, and generally we allow 26 to 28 hour clearance times. But that is a best guess. What we need to do is based upon some real time data, so other studies need to be done in that particular area. That used to be funded out of the Hurricane Preparedness Program, and those studies are lagging way behind.¹²

Mississippi declared mandatory evacuations which generally went well

Mississippi evacuations were generally mandatory and went relatively well. Five Mississippi counties — Hancock, Jackson, Harrison, Stone, and Pearl River — issued mandatory evacuation orders on or before August 28 for specific areas or zones of their counties and/or those living in mobile homes.¹³ For example, Harrison County first issued a mandatory evacuation order for its zones A and B, which include all of its Gulf-front and low-lying areas, at 10 a.m. on August 28; it strongly advised, but did not mandate, that residents in its highest elevations (zone C) evacuate the county.¹⁴ According to Governor Haley Barbour, he has the authority to usurp county officials’ decisions — that is, order a mandatory evacuation if they have not — but he chose not to do so because county

officials are closer to the situation than he is.¹⁵

During the evacuation, Mississippi Department of Transportation personnel collected and reported traffic flow information along evacuation routes, including areas where contraflow was in place for those evacuating Louisiana. At 7 p.m. on August 28, traffic counts were “consistently high” and the contraflow areas showed a continuous increase in traffic.¹⁶ According to traffic counts, by 11 p.m. that evening, traffic along the evacuation/contraflow routes had decreased substantially.¹⁷

Rep. Gene Taylor asserted, however, that evacuation planning ought to include providing people with gasoline, especially at the end of the month:

The other thing that I find interesting is that in all these scenarios that I’m sure you’ve thought out, did FEMA bother to realize that it is the 28th of the month, a lot of people live on fixed income, be it a Social Security check or a retirement check, they’ve already made their necessary purchase for the month. What they couldn’t envision is having to fill up their gas tank one more time, at almost 3 bucks a gallon just to get the heck out of there. What I think no one is really focused on is a heck of a lot of people who stayed behind were people with limited means.¹⁸

Former Undersecretary Brown strongly opposed the suggestion that FEMA should have supplied gasoline:

Congressman, FEMA is not there to supply gasoline, transportation; it is not the role of the federal government to supply five gallons of gas for every individual to put in a car to go somewhere. I personally believe that is a horrible path to go down. And while my heart goes out to people on fixed incomes, it is primarily a State and local responsibility.¹⁹

Whether providing gasoline should be a federal or state and local responsibility, there may very well have been victims of Hurricane Katrina who did not evacuate because at the end of the month they had run out of money for gasoline and found no other way to get gasoline or evacuate.



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Alabama mandatory evacuations also went relatively well

Alabama began implementing the evacuation early, and its evacuation also went well. Even before any Alabama evacuations began, AEMA and state transportation officials participated in the FEMA regional Evacuation Liaison Team conference calls during which emergency managers from Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi shared information on the status of evacuation routes, road closures, traffic volumes, hotel availability, and other interstate implications of significant population migrations in the region.²⁰

As it became clear Katrina would have a significant impact on the Alabama coast, Baldwin County emergency management officials called for a voluntary evacuation of all coastal, flood-prone, and low lying areas at 5 p.m. on Saturday, August 27.²¹ State emergency management officials asked the Governor to declare a mandatory evacuation for threatened areas of Baldwin and Mobile Counties on Sunday, August 28.²² According to the announcement released by the Governor's office, "In Baldwin County, the order calls for the evacuation of those on Plash Island, the Fort Morgan peninsula, and all areas south of Fort Morgan Road for Gulf Shores. The order also calls for the evacuation of those living in Perdido Key and south of Perdido Beach Boulevard. Those in all low lying and flood-prone areas south of I-10 in Baldwin County and those living along the Mobile Bay Area and other water inlets also fall under the evacuation order."²³ Governor Riley testified:

... [W]e made it voluntary 36 hours out, and then shortly thereafter we made it mandatory. As it comes closer, as the cone begins to funnel in and we have a higher likelihood that it is going to happen, we make it mandatory. We ask people to leave. We do everything we can to encourage them to leave. But, again, the limiting factor is the amount of time. The difference between trying to evacuate our beaches before Labor Day and after Labor Day is like daylight and dark, because we have so many more vacationers there. And then when you layer on top of that the number of people that will be coming out of the Florida panhandle that will come through Alabama, if we don't start it three days early, you just physically do not have the capacity to take care of it.²⁴



Alabama did not implement reverse lane strategies (i.e., contraflow) in response to Hurricane Katrina, as road closures were limited and traffic volume never warranted it. The state reported 118,900 applications for evacuation assistance by Alabama residents, of which 23,853 were by out of state residents.²⁵

Louisiana evacuation of general population was very successful

The Louisiana evacuation for the general population, including contraflow, worked very well. Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and other state officials labeled the implementation of this evacuation as "masterful" and as one of the most successful emergency evacuations in history.²⁶ Based on National Weather Service reports of Katrina's "dramatic shift" toward Louisiana on Friday, the state had less time than planned to prepare for contraflow and had to implement it in a compressed timeframe.²⁷

Nevertheless, the contraflow planning and implementation went smoothly. The state effectively used conference calls to coordinate among the parishes. Some parishes declared some level of evacuation for the entire parish as early as Saturday morning, August 27, at 9:00 a.m. These were generally the lower parishes (LaFourche, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Charles), which was consistent with the Louisiana state plan for getting these populations to evacuate ahead of the metropolitan New Orleans population.

The parishes generally started with the declaration of a "recommended" evacuation and changed these to a "mandatory" evacuation as Katrina got closer. The state also coordinated closely with Mississippi and Texas on traffic and/or sheltering issues. For example, Friday afternoon Blanco called Barbour to coordinate that portion of the contraflow plan that involved highways leading out of Louisiana into Mississippi, and Governor Barbour agreed to the contraflow plan.²⁸

Finding: Despite adequate warning 56 hours before landfall, Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin delayed ordering a mandatory evacuation in New Orleans until 19 hours before landfall

Terms for voluntary and mandatory evacuations lack clear definitions

A wide variety of terms were used to describe the levels of evacuation orders, indicating a lack of clarity and a potential point of confusion for the resident population. For example, the different parishes used a wide variety of terms to describe the level of evacuation imposed before declaring a mandatory evacuation. These terms included a “precautionary” evacuation, a “voluntary” evacuation, a “recommended” evacuation, a “highly recommended” evacuation, and a “highly suggested” evacuation.²⁹ It appeared many of these officials were bending over backward to avoid using the term mandatory.

Throughout our discussions in all three states, Select Committee staff were unable to find a clear and consistent definition of mandatory evacuation. However, there was a consensus among almost all officials in all three states that even under a mandatory evacuation, authorities would not forcibly remove someone from their home. For example, in the case of Louisiana, both Blanco and LOHSEP Deputy Director Colonel Jeff Smith emphatically rejected the idea that people could be forcibly removed from their homes even under a mandatory evacuation order. Blanco said, “Well, in the United States of America you don’t force people [out of their homes], you urge them.”³⁰ Smith said: “It is America. You can’t force people on to buses; you can’t go into their houses at gunpoint and leave [sic].”³¹

Under Alabama state law, a mandatory evacuation declaration by the Governor is required before counties can take certain actions to ensure maximum compliance with local orders by those at risk.³² But, regarding the practical meaning and effect of “mandatory” versus “voluntary” evacuations, Riley said:

We probably need to come up with a better definition of what mandatory is. We call it a

mandatory evacuation because everyone else calls it a mandatory evacuation. But do we arrest anyone? No. Do we send people door to door? Absolutely. We have a phone system, that they can explain to you in just a moment, where we have an automated system that calls every resident, asks them to leave, advises them with a phone message of how important it is. We keep doing it until we get in touch with everyone. Do you ever get to the point that everyone is going to leave? I don’t think so.³³

Nevertheless, it is clear to the Select Committee that declaring a mandatory evacuation delivers a more powerful statement to the public than declaring a voluntary or similarly worded evacuation. A mandatory evacuation implies that individuals do not have a choice, that the government will not be able to protect them and provide relief if they remain, and it generally conveys a higher level of urgency.

Federal, state, and local officials recognized the potential for catastrophe and flooding and communicated that potential among themselves and to the public

Regardless of the various terms used for evacuations, federal officials fully informed Blanco and New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin about the threat to New Orleans. On the evening of August 27, National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield called Blanco and later spoke to Nagin about the power of Hurricane Katrina.³⁴ Also on Sunday, President Bush called Blanco to express his concern for the people of New Orleans and the dangers they faced and urged a mandatory evacuation.³⁵ On Sunday, the Slidell Office of the National Weather Service, issued a very strongly worded warning at approximately 10:00 a.m.:

Devastating damage expected . . . Hurricane Katrina . . . a most powerful hurricane with unprecedented strength . . . rivaling the intensity of Hurricane Camille of 1969. . . Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks . . . perhaps longer. At least half of well constructed homes will have roof and wall failure. All gabled roofs will fail . . . leaving those homes severely damaged or destroyed. . . Water shortages will make human suffering incredible by modern standards.³⁶



State and local officials also urged the public to evacuate by foretelling the potentially catastrophic consequences. For example, beginning on Saturday, August 27, Blanco publicly urged citizens to evacuate the city, expressing her concern for the strength of the levees against at least a Category 4 storm.³⁷ In several interviews on Saturday and Sunday, Blanco stated that flooding in New Orleans was a major concern. On Saturday at approximately 8:00 p.m., she appeared on CNN and said that in New Orleans “[t]he storm surge could bring in 15 to 20 feet of water. [People in the city of New Orleans] will not survive that if indeed that happens.”³⁸ In the Sunday morning papers, it was reported that she had said the water levels could reach as high as 20 feet.³⁹ In a television interview on Sunday, Blanco was asked if the 15 foot levees could survive the storm, and she replied: “I don’t think anything can tolerate a storm surge of 15-20 feet.”⁴⁰

In a Fox News interview on Sunday, Nagin was very specific about the threat. He said whether the levees would hold was the “big question.”⁴¹ He said he hoped people who stayed in the French Quarter would go up to their homes’ second or third story and bring something to chop through their roofs.⁴² He expressed his worry that “[the levees] have never truly been tested the way they’re getting ready to be tested. If there’s a breach and if they start to fail, it probably will create somewhat of a domino effect which would pour even more water into the city.”⁴³

Blanco’s staff also called ministers on Saturday to urge them to tell their congregations to get out.⁴⁴ And apparently, the Mayor and his staff did similar things.⁴⁵ But these steps were clearly insufficient.

The declarations of a “mandatory” evacuation were delayed or never made in metropolitan New Orleans

Neither Blanco nor Nagin, however, ordered a mandatory evacuation until Sunday morning. According to the Saturday newspapers, Nagin said “he will make a decision

about evacuations and other emergency procedures [Saturday] about noon.”⁴⁶ At a news conference on Saturday, Nagin announced: “Ladies and Gentlemen, this is not a test. This is the real deal.”⁴⁷ But as late as Saturday afternoon, according to news reports, Nagin was consulting city lawyers about legal liability to the city’s businesses for lost revenue from evacuating customers.⁴⁸

In addition, despite express authority to commandeer resources and enforce or facilitate the evacuation of the City of New Orleans and despite recognition of the probability that Hurricane Katrina would cause breaches of the levees and flooding of the city, Blanco and Nagin did not exercise those authorities by declaring a mandatory evacuation and enforcing it or using state and city resources to facilitate the evacuation of those who could not or would not, absent extraordinary measures and assistance, evacuate. This extraordinary storm required extraordinary measures, which the Governor and Mayor did not take.

Finally, on Sunday morning at around 11:00 a.m. central time — 19 hours before projected landfall, Nagin announced the issuance of a mandatory evacuation order.⁴⁹ According to the New Orleans Plan, that gave the Mayor the authority to “direct and compel, by any necessary and reasonable force, the evacuation of all or part of the population from any stricken or threatened area within the City if he deems this action necessary for the preservation of life, or for disaster mitigation, response, or recovery.”⁵⁰ As previously noted, the New Orleans Plan also recognizes that “[t]he safe evacuation of threatened populations when endangered by a major catastrophic event is one of the principle reasons for developing a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan” and that “[s]pecial arrangements will be made to evacuate persons unable to transport themselves or who require special life saving assistance.”⁵¹

In a joint news conference on Sunday morning, Blanco and Nagin continued to express their concerns and explain the reason for the Mayor’s issuing a mandatory evacuation order. Their comments raise the question as to why, given the severity of the predicted catastrophe, the mandatory evacuation was not ordered sooner.

Mayor Nagin: Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I had better news for you. **But we are facing a storm that most of us have feared.** I do not want to create panic. But I do want the citizens to understand that

this is very serious, and it's of the highest nature. And that's why we are taking this unprecedented move.

The storm is now a Cat 5, a Category 5, as I appreciate it, with sustained winds of 150 miles an hour, with wind gusts of 190 miles per hour.

The storm surge most likely will topple our levee system. So we are preparing to deal with that also. So that's why we're ordering a mandatory evacuation

. . . .

This is a once in probably a lifetime event. The city of New Orleans has never seen a hurricane of this strength to hit it almost directly, which is what they're projecting right now.⁵²

During the press conference Blanco stated:

I want to reiterate what the mayor has said. This is a very dangerous time. **Just before we walked into this room, President Bush called and told me to share with all of you that he is very concerned about the citizens. He is concerned about the impact that this hurricane would have on our people. And he asked me to please ensure that there would be a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans.**

The leaders at the highest ranks of our nation have recognized the destructive forces and the possible awesome danger that we are in. **And I just want to say, we need to get as many people out as possible.** The shelters will end up probably without electricity or with minimum electricity from generators in the end. **There may be intense flooding that will be not in our control, which would be ultimately the most dangerous situation that many of our people could face.**

Waters could be as high as 15 to 20 feet. That is what the Miami National Weather Service, the National Hurricane Center, has shared with us. That would probably be ultimately the worst situation. We're hoping that it does not happen that way. We need to pray, of course, very strongly, that the

hurricane force would diminish. But just remember, even if it diminishes to 1, there were six people lost in Florida when it was a Category 1 hurricane. So there's still imminent danger. There seems to be no real relief in sight, and it has been startling to see how accurate the path was predicted, and how it is following the predicted path.

So we have no reason to believe right now that it will alter its path.

Hopefully, you know, it could move just a little bit in one direction or another and not keep New Orleans in its sights. But we don't know that that would happen. That would be — we would be blessed if that happened.⁵³

Jefferson Parish — the other major component of metropolitan New Orleans — never did declare a mandatory evacuation, except for the lower parts of the parish on the Gulf Coast. In a conference call among parish officials, Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard said he did not have the "resources to enforce" a mandatory evacuation.⁵⁴ Resource or enforcement issues, however, were not raised by any of the other parishes that declared mandatory evacuations. In addition, no one requested that the state or federal government provide resources to supplement those of the parish to implement a more complete evacuation.



STATE OF LOUISIANA

Finding: The failure to order timely mandatory evacuations, Mayor Nagin’s decision to shelter but not evacuate the remaining population, and decisions of individuals led to incomplete evacuation

Earlier mandatory evacuation could have helped get more people out

While the Mayor and the Governor recognized the dangers and expressed them to the public, they did not implement evacuation procedures for all of the citizens of New Orleans that reflected the seriousness of the threat. The results demonstrate the flaw of the evacuation — tens of thousands of citizens did not get out of harm’s way.

Specifically, the failure to order a mandatory evacuation until Sunday, the decision to enforce that order by “asking” people who had not evacuated to go to checkpoints for bus service, and then using that bus service to take people only as far as the Superdome did not reflect the publicly stated recognition that Hurricane Katrina would “most likely topple [the] levee system” and result in “intense flooding” and “waters as high as 15 or 20 feet,” rendering large portions of the city uninhabitable.⁵⁵ As a result, more than 70,000 people remained in the City to be rescued after the storm.⁵⁶

While Blanco, Nagin, and Broussard, and leaders from other parishes carefully managed the phased contraflow evacuation, that only facilitated the evacuation of those who had the means to evacuate the city. Nagin testified that, on Saturday, August 27, he “called for a strong voluntary evacuation, urging all citizens that were able to evacuate the city.”⁵⁷ Although Nagin was rightly proud of the achievement of the contraflow evacuation of the region, he also conceded that “it probably wasn’t as good as we — all of our citizens needed.”⁵⁸

Some citizens of New Orleans believed that a mandatory evacuation should have been called earlier and that the government needed to assist people to evacuate. New Orleans citizen and evacuee Doreen Keeler testified, “If a mandatory evacuation [order] would have been called sooner, it would have been easier to move seniors



AP PHOTO/MARI DARR-WELCH

out of the area and many lives would have been saved.”⁵⁹ She further testified that “[g]oing to [senior citizens] with, yo, this is a mandatory evacuation, you do not have a choice, you have to leave, I feel would definitely help me to get my senior citizens out without waiting as long as I did in order to leave. And I think that if by some miracle there was any type of evacuation plan available, it could have been put into play earlier if a mandatory evacuation had been called.”⁶⁰

New Orleans citizen and community leader Dyan French asked: “Why would you get in the public media and ask a city, where 80 percent of its citizens ride public transit, to evacuate? What [were] they supposed to do? Fly?”⁶¹ New Orleans citizen and evacuee Terrol Williams observed, “I think, unfortunately, a lot of the destruction that we saw, that persons were unable to safely evacuate, was because they were basically poor,”⁶² which was echoed by Doreen Keeler: “They suffered through it because they had no way of getting out.”⁶³

New Orleans citizen and evacuee Leah Hodges complained that “[t]he stray animals from the animal shelter, most of whom would have been euthanized, were

evacuated 2 days before the storm, and the people were left to die. Buses that could have gotten our people, who otherwise could not get out, were left to flood, and people were left to die.”⁶⁴ And Barbara Arnwine, Executive Director for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, testified: “We know that people were not able to evacuate because some people just didn’t own cars.”⁶⁵

In contrast to New Orleans, officials in adjoining Plaquemines Parish cited their early declaration of a mandatory evacuation as the key to achieving a high evacuation rate. Plaquemines Parish President Benny Rousselle (according to Plaquemines Parish Sheriff Jiff Hingle) declared a mandatory evacuation on television at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 27.⁶⁶ Sheriff’s deputies started working the intersections to turn off traffic lights and expedite outbound traffic.⁶⁷ On Sunday, August 28, Plaquemines Parish Sheriff’s deputies went door-to-door to warn people to evacuate and to identify those who needed help doing so.⁶⁸ Hingle said these efforts resulted in Plaquemines Parish having an evacuation rate of 97 to 98 percent, which helped account for the small number of fatalities there — only three.⁶⁹

The shelter of last resort for those who could not or would not evacuate was inadequate

A critical part of evacuation planning is accounting for those who cannot evacuate on their own, including those without access to private transportation. State and local emergency operations plans task transportation agencies with primary responsibility to assemble buses and other resources to operate this response function. For example, Alabama’s Mobile County EOP states: “The principle mode of transportation during an emergency situation will be private vehicles. There will be citizens in Mobile County that do not have private vehicles nor are able to obtain transportation. These people will be looking to the City and County government to provide this emergency transportation. The Mobile County Emergency Management Agency has been given the responsibility of managing and coordinating this task.”⁷⁰ An annex to the Baldwin and Mobile County plans is more explicit:

Evacuation preparedness plans consider all persons who do not have access to a private vehicle and therefore would have to rely on public transportation for evacuation. Local governments

attempt to arrange for adequate resources to meet the demand for public transportation. Planning for adequate special needs emergency transportation for residents in private homes is usually the responsibility of local emergency management officials, while transportation for those in health-related facilities is the responsibility of the individual facilities. Although detailed information concerning residents of private homes may be difficult to obtain, each local government is developing procedures for maintaining an up-to-date roster of persons likely to need special assistance. Non-ambulatory patients will require transportation that can easily accommodate wheelchairs, stretchers, and, possibly, life-sustaining equipment. Lack of resources for these needs could result in critical evacuation delays and increased hazards for the evacuees. The Special Needs population for each county changes from year to year and requires public cooperation and assistance to maintain an up-to-date listing.⁷¹



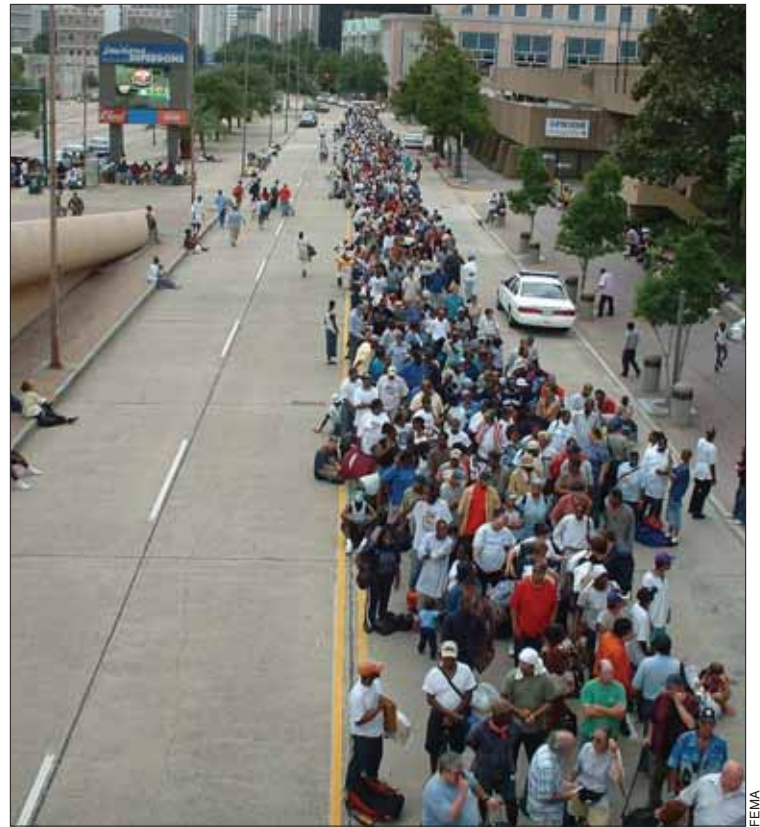
AP PHOTO/DAVID J. PHILLIP

Similarly, the New Orleans Plan specifically addresses the issue of those without access to transportation. The plan states that “[s]pecial arrangements will be made to evacuate persons unable to transport themselves.... Additional personnel will be recruited to assist in evacuation procedures as needed.”⁷² The New Orleans Plan further warns that “[i]f an evacuation order is issued without the mechanisms needed to disseminate the information to the affected persons, then we face the possibility of having large numbers of people either stranded and left to the mercy of the storm, or left in areas impacted by toxic materials.”⁷³

Specifically, the New Orleans Plan provides that “[t]ransportation will be provided to those persons requiring public transportation from the area,” placing the Regional Transit Authority as the lead agency for transportation, supported by multiple federal, state, and local agencies, including the Orleans Parish School Board, New Orleans Equipment Maintenance Division, Louisiana Department of Transportation, Louisiana National Guard, Port of New Orleans, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, and Amtrak.⁷⁴ The tasks allotted to the RTA include: “plac[ing] special vehicles on alert to be utilized if needed[,] p[ro]vision[ing] supervisors and dispatch[ing] evacuation buses [and i]f warranted by scope of evacuation, implement[ing] additional service.”⁷⁵ The New Orleans Plan expressly acknowledges that “[a]pproximately 100,000 Citizens of New Orleans do not have means of personal transportation.”⁷⁶ Following the mandatory evacuation order, city officials sent the police and fire department through the city “asking” people to go to checkpoints where buses circulating through the city would pick them up — but only to take them to the Superdome which had been opened as a refuge of last resort that day.⁷⁷

Despite the New Orleans Plan’s acknowledgement that there are people who cannot evacuate by themselves, the city did not make arrangements for their evacuation. Instead, city officials decided to shelter them in New Orleans. As stated previously, emergency planners prefer evacuation to sheltering, because the sheltered population is subject to the most intense dangers of the storm. Evacuation is also favored because it may be slow and difficult to get relief personnel and supplies back into hurricane ravaged areas.

In addition, New Orleans preparations for sheltering these individuals were woefully inadequate. On Sunday



FEMA

morning, New Orleans officials, instead of working to move individuals out of New Orleans and out of harm’s way, were drafting a plan to seize private facilities to create additional “refuges of last resort.”⁷⁸ Ultimately, city officials designated only the Superdome as such a refuge.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Superdome proved to be inadequate for the crowds that had to take refuge there. Only at the last minute did the City ask for food and water and medical personnel for the Superdome. As discussed in the MEDICAL CARE chapter, some of the federal medical assistance teams were called in so late they did not make it to the Superdome before landfall. On Sunday morning, the New Orleans Director of Homeland Security, Terry Ebbert, predicted “nightmare” conditions in the Superdome.⁷⁹

Individuals share the blame for incomplete evacuation

The role of the individual was also an important factor in metropolitan New Orleans’ incomplete evacuation. In Louisiana, state and parish officials said that it is generally the individual’s responsibility to evacuate or identify themselves as having special needs if they need help. State and parish officials noted varying degrees of cooperation with evacuations among the individuals in the general

population. They said many residents evacuate early on their own, even before an evacuation is declared. These individuals watch the weather reports when a hurricane is in the Gulf and make their own informed choices.

Some residents play “hurricane roulette.”

Officials know from experience, however, that some percentage (from 10-25 percent) will not evacuate. The Governor and other state officials said some residents play “hurricane roulette.”⁸⁰ That is, against the advice of the authorities, they stay and take the risk that the hurricane will hit somewhere else or that they will be lucky and relatively unaffected.

Select Committee staff heard similar comments in Mississippi. Testimony from county emergency management officials as well as Mississippi’s governor indicated that “hurricane fatigue” as well as the expense of repeatedly evacuating when storms threaten may have caused some to not heed the mandatory evacuation orders. For example, Barbour testified that various areas in the state had undergone mandatory evacuations for Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and Hurricane Dennis earlier in 2005, but in both instances the storms ultimately made landfall farther east, sparing Mississippi.⁸¹

Both state and parish officials in Louisiana said the older population, some of whom might be classified as special needs, make up a substantial portion of those playing “hurricane roulette.” They said there are a few reasons for this. First, many of the older residents had experience “sitting out” earlier hurricanes such as Betsy (1965) or Camille (1969) and reasoned they could “sit out” Katrina. Second, some of them were just “set in their ways” and would not listen to others’ advice, even that of their own adult children, to evacuate. In addition, Katrina was originally headed for the Florida Panhandle, and its turn to the west caught many residents by surprise. Finally, it was the end of the month, when people did not have money for gas to evacuate.⁸²

Regardless of their reasons for not evacuating, those that had the means to evacuate and did not do so must share some of the blame. Many of these people paid for

their poor choices with their lives — as rising floodwaters drown them in their homes. Others who stayed, but could have left, suffered the less severe consequences of walking through floodwaters to crowded shelters or other high ground. These individuals suffered in horrible conditions — some with shelter and food and water and some without any of these — while they awaited evacuation, which they could have done for themselves earlier.

Finding: The incomplete pre-landfall evacuation led to deaths, thousands of dangerous rescues, and horrible conditions for those who remained



AP PHOTO/PAUL SANCYA

Failure of complete evacuation resulted in hundreds of deaths and severe suffering for thousands

Contrary to Blanco’s claim that “[t]he word ‘mandatory’ doesn’t mean any more than us getting up, saying, get out[.]”⁸³ the delay in calling a mandatory evacuation and not enforcing or facilitating that evacuation had real consequences for the city and for the protection of

“Hurricane Fatigue” — May have caused some people to not heed the mandatory evacuation orders.

ordinary people. As noted above, many residents believed that an earlier declaration of a mandatory evacuation would have helped get more people out. The President of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association also told Select Committee staff that at least one nursing home had been unable to evacuate its patients prelandfall because it could not find bus drivers by the time the mandatory evacuation order was issued.⁸⁴

While these warnings were sufficient to motivate more than a million citizens to evacuate using the state's revised, well-planned and executed, phased contraflow evacuation plan, more than 70,000 people did not evacuate.⁸⁵ Those who did not evacuate were exposed first to the dangers of drowning in the flood waters after the breach of the levees and then to deprivation of food, water, and shelter as they awaited rescue from other locations.

The anticipated flooding of New Orleans, unfortunately, occurred in an environment where a population of more than 70,000 had not evacuated, with thousands of these people remaining in their homes. Hundreds of these people died as floodwaters enveloped low lying neighborhoods in waters above the roof lines.⁸⁶ In tours of the affected areas, Select Committee staff noted the debris lines from the floodwaters were halfway up the roof of many single-story houses in St. Bernard Parish. The parish Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Larry Ingargiola told Select Committee staff that during the storm, he had answered emergency cell phone calls from desperate people trapped in their attics, who had no way to escape the rising floodwaters.⁸⁷

As stated before, many of these deaths were the result of hurricane roulette — individuals making decisions not to evacuate, or, for the poor population and those who procrastinated, not to seek shelter in the Superdome or other refuges of last resort in other parishes. As discussed in the MEDICAL CARE chapter, there were also many deaths among those in medical and nursing home facilities.

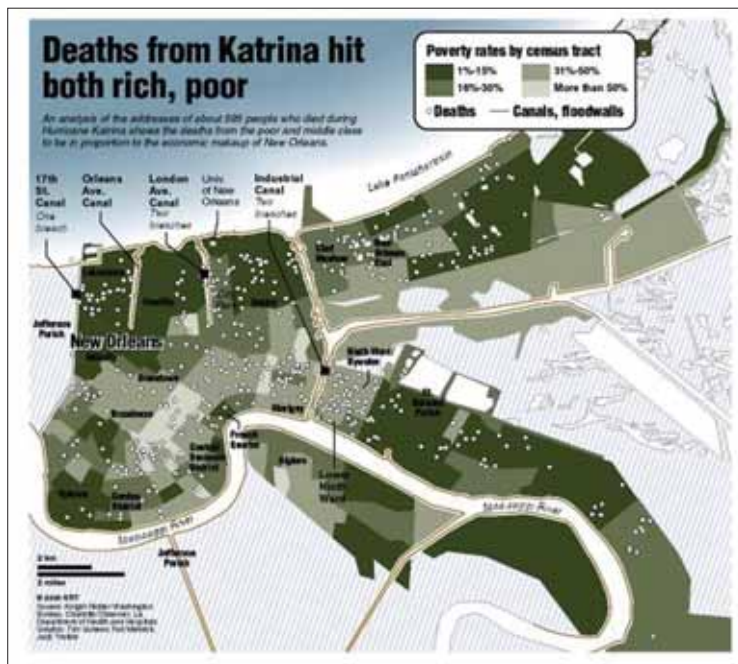
An analysis of these deaths indicates that the flooding had a broad impact across all neighborhoods in New Orleans and the immediate surrounding parishes. The Knight Ridder news organization, using preliminary data from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, reviewed the location, ethnicity, sex and age of the victims. The results of their analysis were published in the Baton Rouge *Advocate* newspaper on December 30, 2005.⁸⁸ According to the analysis, “[t]he bodies of at least 588 people were recovered in neighborhoods that engineers say would have remained largely dry had the [levees] not given way. . . .”⁸⁹ However, according to Orleans Parish coroner Dr. Frank Minyard, “[t]he cause of death for many will never be known because their bodies were too badly decomposed by the time they were recovered.”⁹⁰ Dr. Minyard, however, did estimate that 20 percent of Katrina's New Orleans victims drowned,⁹¹ and scores of others died of other causes awaiting rescue, trapped by floodwaters. Similarly, St. Bernard Parish Coroner, Dr. Bryan Bertucci, is cited as saying that most of the parish's 123 victims drowned in their homes.⁹²

The analysis found that the victims of Hurricane Katrina were roughly proportionate to the pre-landfall population (based on census data) in terms of ethnicity, sex, and wealth. In terms of ethnicity, the dead in New Orleans were 62 percent black, compared to 66 percent for the total parish population.⁹³ The dead in St. Bernard Parish were 92 percent white, compared to 88 percent of the total parish population.⁹⁴ The percentage of the dead by sex was approximately the same as the overall population.⁹⁵ In terms of wealth, the analysis found that the percentage of dead bodies found in poorer New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish neighborhoods—as measured by poverty rates and median household incomes—was roughly equivalent to their percentage in the overall population.⁹⁶



AP PHOTO/DAVE MARTIN

The finding about wealthier residents comports with statements by Louisiana First Assistant Attorney General Nicholas Gachassin, Jr. who said that many New Orleans area residents with the wealth and the means to evacuate and who decided not to do so paid for that decision with their lives.⁹⁷ Gachassin said that there were approximately 250,000 vehicles left in New Orleans, which he said demonstrated that there were many people with the means to leave the city who chose not to do so.⁹⁸ Similarly, the *Advocate* article stated that “at many of the addresses where the dead were found, their cars remained in their driveways, flood-ruined symbols of fatal miscalculation.”⁹⁹



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agencies, non-governmental organizations, and citizen volunteers. State rescuers included personnel from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, local police, and the National Guard.¹⁰² Federal rescue personnel included the Coast Guard, the Department of Defense, and several law enforcement agencies. All 28 of FEMA’s Urban Search and Rescue teams (who come from a variety of states and local governments across the nation) were also involved in the rescues. The chapters on THE MILITARY and LAW ENFORCEMENT have more details on the search and rescue efforts by the military and law enforcement, respectively.



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Failure of complete evacuations required heroic search and rescue efforts

The fortunate ones — among those who had stayed in their homes — were those that were able to climb to their roofs or flee into flooded streets. Many of these individuals had to use tools or other objects to chop through their roofs to escape the rising floodwaters. Thousands of these people were saved by a massive and heroic search and rescue effort. The U.S. Coast Guard alone reported that it rescued more than 33,000.¹⁰⁰ The Louisiana National Guard reported initial rescues of more than 25,000.¹⁰¹ These people were pulled out of the floodwaters into boats or plucked from roofs into helicopters operated by a wide array of government

The massive search and rescue effort, while necessary under the circumstances, distracted emergency managers and diverted key assets from other critical missions. According to National Guard officials involved in search and rescue, the entire focus of Monday and Tuesday was on saving lives; that was the Governor's top priority.¹⁰³ While the Select Committee does not question Blanco's urgency and priority on saving lives *after* the flooding took place, the same urgency and priority on a more complete evacuation of New Orleans *before* the flooding would have saved lives. If there had been a more complete evacuation, the number of flood victims requiring search and rescue would have been greatly reduced. This would have allowed federal, state, and local emergency response officials to focus earlier on re-establishing communications and situational awareness, and moving commodities into hard hit parishes beyond New Orleans. Many of the helicopters used for search and rescue could have been utilized for these tasks.

Those in shelters or on high ground suffered through horrible conditions

Those who escaped to shelters or high ground suffered horrible conditions at a number of locations including the Superdome, the Convention Center, and the Cloverleaf, where they arrived through a number of different means. Some had walked or driven before landfall, some had walked after the floodwaters reached their homes, and some had been dropped off by search and rescue boats or helicopters. Each of the locations had their own miserable conditions.

New Orleans opened the Superdome as a "refuge of last resort."¹⁰⁴ As such, it was set up to allow people to survive a storm passing over; it was not intended to house, feed, and water thousands of people for several days. A cadre of more than 200 New Orleans Police and the Louisiana National Guard searched all people entering the Superdome for weapons and contraband.¹⁰⁵ In addition, FEMA and the National Guard had prepositioned food and water in the Superdome, and some additional food and water was trucked in at the last minute.¹⁰⁶ Some of the people arriving had listened to the Mayor's suggestion and had brought a three day supply of food and water, sleeping bags, and clothes. Those who came to the Superdome after the flooding brought nothing but the clothes on their backs.

The conditions in the Superdome soon deteriorated. The initial calm situation Sunday night changed early Monday morning when the dome's roof opened up and the building lost power. While the Superdome was still structurally sound, the hole in the roof scared people; it made noise and water started coming in.¹⁰⁷ The National Guard had to suddenly move thousands of people from the field up into the seating sections.¹⁰⁸ Later, after the flooding, the power went out across the city.

Without power, the only lighting in the Superdome was emergency lighting that ran off the emergency generator. This was not the same as full lighting, and with no power, the air conditioning was also not working. Related to the power outage, the water system went out, causing the toilets to back up, creating an awful stench that grew progressively worse as the days wore on.

Many people could not stand the heat and smell and gathered outside on the surrounding walkway area, which thus became very crowded. Although the situation was bad and deteriorating, there was never a shortage of food and water; they were distributed twice a day at first and continuously later.¹⁰⁹ In general, people were hot, it smelled, and they were anxious to leave. This deteriorating situation led to the increasing urgency among officials and the population to evacuate the Superdome.¹¹⁰

Conditions were also unbearable in the Convention Center. The Select Committee was unable to determine exactly when the Convention Center became a shelter and when officials became aware of the deteriorating



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AP PHOTO/DAVID J. PHILLIP

conditions there. None of the officials who spoke with the Select Committee staff were willing to take responsibility for the operation of the Convention Center as a “shelter,” and none claimed that they knew about the situation until Wednesday morning or afternoon, August 31.

While these officials stated that the Convention Center was never designated as a shelter like the Superdome, Mayor Nagin’s testimony suggested that the city had sanctioned that location. In his prepared statement, the mayor stated that “[t]he swelling crowd at the Superdome and the number of people needing shelter required us to open the Convention Center as another refuge.”¹¹¹ Brown was widely criticized for saying on Thursday night that he only found out that afternoon about the people at the Convention Center.¹¹² Late that same night, however, the city of New Orleans finally requested that the National Guard secure and evacuate the Convention Center in conjunction with the New Orleans Police Department the next day.¹¹³

People initially went to the Convention Center after the breaches of the levees late Monday night or early Tuesday morning. As the floodwaters rose, people left their homes and headed for higher ground. The Convention Center is near the Mississippi River levee, one of the higher elevations in New Orleans. The National Guard estimated that there were 19,000 people there.¹¹⁴ Conditions in the Convention Center were notably worse than the Superdome in several ways. Like the Superdome, the Convention Center had no electrical power, no lighting, no air conditioning, and no functioning toilets. But unlike the Superdome, the Convention Center had no authorities or security on hand, no weapon screening, no food and no water.¹¹⁵



AP PHOTO/ERIC GAY



AP PHOTO/ERIC GAY

Other high ground spots became spontaneous gathering points with miserable conditions. Many people went to these locations on their own, because their houses were flooded and they were looking for dry land. In addition, many people were dropped off at these sites by rescuers. Because of initial emphasis on saving lives, people were just dumped off there by helicopters or boats without any initial concerns for providing them with food or water.

Unlike the Superdome or the Convention Center, there was no shelter from the sweltering sun. Specific locations

where evacuees found themselves included the Cloverleaf (where two highways met), the Industrial Canal levees, the Mississippi River levees, and Broad Street levees. These locations had generally not been manned with security personnel such as police, nor had there been any plans to supply them with food, water, or medical treatment.



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The “Cloverleaf” on the interstate was one of the worst locations. The site was being used for medical triage and evacuation, so there was initially some food and water there, at least for the medical patients. However, additional people arrived on their own or by the helicopters or boats that rescued them from the water. The supply of food and water was not sufficient for the crowd, which eventually grew to 6,000-7,000 people.¹¹⁶

Flooding further hampered relief efforts for those not initially evacuating

Efforts to provide relief to those stranded at the Superdome, Convention Center, the Cloverleaf, and other positions of high ground were stymied by the floodwaters. Simple tasks, such as trucking food and water to these locations, were complicated by flooded highways that necessitated the use of high clearance vehicles or long detours. Some of these sites were very difficult to supply or evacuate later because they were “islands” completely surrounded by water. As mentioned in the COMMUNICATIONS and the COMMAND AND CONTROL chapters, the lack of communications, situational awareness, command and control, and effective logistics systems further hampered efforts to identify many of these locations and coordinate relief. The floodwaters also complicated efforts to conduct a post landfall evacuation, as discussed in the next section.

Finding: Federal, state, and local officials’ failure to anticipate the post-landfall conditions delayed post-landfall evacuation and support

Federal, state, and local officials had not prepared for post landfall evacuation despite predictions of extensive flooding

While these victims endured horrendous conditions, hundreds of city buses and school buses that could have been used for evacuation sat useless, flooded or without drivers. Nagin testified that the school buses belong to the New Orleans school district and, to his credit, he is now considering a cooperative agreement with the school district to move the school buses out of the area for the next storm.¹¹⁷ Nagin also testified that the RTA buses were “always staged, or have been staged, in an area that has been high and dry throughout every storm that has ever hit the City of New Orleans; and we expected the same for this event. Unfortunately, those buses flooded also because 80 percent of the city went under water.”¹¹⁸ He testified that he had had trouble getting drivers even for the 20 buses that had taken residents to the Superdome prelandfall “because most [drivers] had evacuated” and that the National Guard was not available to drive buses.¹¹⁹



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By the time Hurricane Katrina made landfall at 6:10 a.m. central time on Monday, August 29, approximately 10-12,000 people were sheltered in the Superdome.¹²⁰ The massive flooding led to urgent search and rescue operations throughout the city and in other parishes as well. Those search and rescue operations moved tens of thousands of people off of their roofs and out of the flood waters to shelter or high ground. As the flood waters rose, people also self-evacuated from the city to the Superdome, the Convention Center, and other high ground around the city.

As previously noted, the Governor and the Mayor were well aware of the probability of levee breaches and flooding in New Orleans following a Category 4 or 5 hurricane. Federal officials were also aware of that probability. When Brown was asked by Select Committee Member Congressman Hal Rogers: “Was it known by you and others that the flood wall around New Orleans was only rated to take a category 3 hurricane,”¹²¹ he replied, “Yes. That was a fact that came out in [the Hurricane Pam Exercise] that the levees may or may not hold, that the storm surge may or may not top them, they could top — the storm surge could top the levees without breaking and they could top and also break the levees. So we knew both of those were potential.”¹²² As Vice Mayor of Newport News, Virginia, and city planner Charles Allen testified before the Select Committee: “[I]t is clear from information in the news that the U.S. Government, in the form of the U.S. Weather Service [sic], the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Corps of Engineers [sic] understood the magnitude of this storm.”¹²³

Planning for the post landfall evacuation had to be done in emergency environment

Despite the advance knowledge of extensive flooding, the first task order for buses by the federal government to evacuate New Orleans post landfall was not issued until 1:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 31.¹²⁴ Although Blanco claims that Brown told her that he had 500 buses standing by and that she was concerned when those buses did not materialize sooner,¹²⁵ the Select Committee found no other evidence that any such buses were, in fact, “standing by” or that Brown had made such a statement to Blanco.

Developing a plan to evacuate the Superdome and other locations after the flooding was a complicated endeavor. That planning included determining the number of buses needed, accessible routes to the



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Superdome and other locations, security needs, and the ultimate destination of those evacuated. This planning occurred in a highly degraded environment that included limited communications that prevented a full understanding of the scope of the needs and even the visibility of deployed resources. Repeatedly, during the daily video teleconferences, state and federal officials expressed their frustrations with the level of communications.¹²⁶

In assessing the needs for the Superdome alone, Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) Spot Report Number 30, prepared at 2:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 31, (even after the federal task order for buses) reflects that (1) there are 12-15,000 people at the Superdome, (2) the water is not rising as rapidly as previously feared, (3) the loss of electricity does not appear imminent, (3) the intention was to begin evacuations that day and continue them over the next few days, (4) alternate shelters have not been identified, and (5) two days of food and water is on hand.¹²⁷ According to that document, neither the means of egress to the buses for the Superdome population nor the alternative location to which they would be evacuated had been determined.¹²⁸ Options for egress from the Superdome included walking once the State Police can verify a route, constructing temporary bridging, “construct[ing] a sandbag dyke to allow for walk[ing] out,” “us[ing] DOD landing craft to shuttle . . . to buses,” and using helicopters for short flights to buses.¹²⁹ Alternative shelters included “stadiums in the State college system but other options are possible.”¹³⁰ As we now know, many of the buses took people to the Astrodome in Houston. But as of Wednesday morning, FEMA officials were still concerned that Blanco had not spoken to Texas Governor Rick Perry to confirm that part of the plan.¹³¹

The planning process for the post-landfall evacuation did not really begin until Tuesday, August 30. Blanco testified that she did not realize the full consequences of the levee breaches until Tuesday morning, when she was able to travel to New Orleans and see the effects of the flooding for those sheltered in the Superdome.¹³² At the noon video teleconference, Smith asks only that

[Y]ou realize what's going on and the sense of urgency here needs to be ratcheted up. Everybody is being fully cooperative, but in the deployment of some of these Federal assets, especially transportation for the evacuation effort that we're trying to coordinate, we don't need anything to slow that down. The push of the resources and so forth to date has not been an issue, but we don't need to let it become an issues [sic] because we're going to literally have tens of thousands of people that we've got to push these supplies too [sic].¹³³

Later that day and into the evening, FEMA official Phil Parr and others sheltered in the Superdome, apparently unaware of the evacuation planning at the EOC, began their own planning to evacuate the Superdome as they observed the rising waters around the building and realized that people would not be able to walk out of the dome and return home.¹³⁴ According to Parr, the team inside the Superdome devised a plan involving the use of helicopters to airlift people away from the Superdome. They concluded that they needed at least nine helicopters, of which the Louisiana National Guard had three.¹³⁵



They communicated this plan to the FEMA Regional Response Center (FEMA RRC) in Denton, Texas and got initial approval for it, with the RRC searching for the assets to implement it.¹³⁶ They believed their plan would have been able to move virtually all of the evacuees from the Superdome at that time in about 30 hours.¹³⁷ The next day, Parr learned that Commander of Joint Task Force Katrina Lt. General Russel L. Honoré had stopped that plan as he came to Louisiana to lead Joint Task Force Katrina.¹³⁸

At the same time, there remained some doubt about the consequences of the levee breaches. General Don Riley of the Army Corps of Engineers reported at the noon video teleconference on Tuesday, August 30, that "[t]he lake [Pontchartrain] level may recede quickly enough before we can get anything in there [to fill the breach] and then we can turn that pump station on with the city and turn that water around and pump it back into the lake."¹³⁹ FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) Bill Lokey discussed at the same video teleconference that they were "developing the distribution plan [for commodities] that we can get them out to the communities as the water does recede in some areas"¹⁴⁰ The FEMA Acting Director for Response during Hurricane Katrina, Ed Buikema, also said that on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 30 and 31, there was still some hope that the breaches in the levees could be repaired quickly.¹⁴¹

By the Wednesday, noon video teleconference, the numbers at the Superdome had swollen to approximately 23,000.¹⁴² Reggie Johnson from the U.S. Department of Transportation reported that there were 455 buses under contract and "it looks like we've got about 200 that are currently in place, with the remainder that should be coming in on a staggered basis."¹⁴³ The next day, Johnson reported:

120 buses . . . departed for [the] Houston Astrodome last night. And there are 300 buses in the New Orleans area. You may not see those because actually they're staging at what's called the Poker Palace Texaco refueling site, and that's in a place in Louisiana, and I understand that they are drawing down from that site. They're bringing in about 40 buses at a time. There are 155 buses that were requested, and they are en route and should arrive at the truck stop by midnight tonight. We have not received any other requests¹⁴⁴

Blanco also attempted to deploy state resources. She issued an executive order on August 31 to commandeer school buses to assist in the evacuation.¹⁴⁵ While these buses could handle short trips (such as to the airport or other local shelters), they were not appropriate for long trips, such as the trip to Houston.

Lack of willing drivers and diversions of buses further delayed Superdome evacuation

But even as the buses were arriving there were further delays. There was evidence that drivers refused to drive into New Orleans because of perceived security problems.¹⁴⁶ Although the state had found 100 school buses, the drivers, according to Smith, “are little old ladies, and I don’t blame them, they don’t want to go and drive in and do evacuations.”¹⁴⁷ He added that 100 military police had just arrived at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station right across from the Superdome and that two Chinooks with National Guard MPs were arriving.¹⁴⁸

Although the state had found 100 school buses, the drivers, according to Smith, “are little old ladies, and I don’t blame them, they don’t want to go and drive in and do evacuations.”

In addition, there were concerns that drivers had to meet the requirements for limiting hours of service between rests. In that same video teleconference, Smith reported that the Governor would waive the commercial drivers license requirements.¹⁴⁹ DOT’s Johnson advised that he would “coordinate with the bus companies to ensure that we can start doubling up on the drivers.”¹⁵⁰ Smith responded to this report by advising that they were about to run out of buses and that he had just made a new request for 500 buses.¹⁵¹

Finally, the buses for the Superdome did not always get to the Superdome. Parr said that the Governor diverted some buses from the Superdome to other locations like the Cloverleaf and other high ground where, unlike the Superdome, there was no food, water, or shelter.¹⁵² Buikema agreed that buses that were intended for the

Superdome actually picked people up off the highway and filled up before getting to the Superdome.¹⁵³

Strangely, the video teleconference transcripts never refer to evacuating the Convention Center. At one point, Smith seems to recognize that the evacuation problem is broader than the Superdome, when he says on September 1, “I would ask you to quit referring to evacuation from the Superdome, but maybe an evacuation from the greater New Orleans area from the Superdome.”¹⁵⁴

The insatiable demand for more buses was a constant source of frustration

On September 2, Smith expressed substantial frustration with the number of available buses: “I’ve got 2500 people on Algiers Point right now, which is not right in the downtown area, that we could be sending missions to and getting off. Those people have been on levees for a day and a half. Get us the transportation assets with drivers, and we’ll start making that happen quicker and more effectively, and I told you all that yesterday.”¹⁵⁵ But by September 2, DOT’s Johnson reported that of apparently 1,100 buses in the system, “800 of those buses . . . are actually operating throughout.”¹⁵⁶ Despite having 1,100 buses operating, DOT recognized at that time that it “appears that what we’re going to have to do is increase the amount of buses from the 1,100 to an additional 5-600 buses for their operation.”¹⁵⁷ But DOT had no “visibility of how many buses [were] right now within the state of Louisiana and getting close to staging areas.”¹⁵⁸ Louisiana National Guard General Graham, who was coordinating the bus evacuation for the state reported that there were 40 commercial buses “on the ground.”¹⁵⁹

Despite the large number of buses deployed, there were still not enough. Some delays were inherent in the system. DOT’s Johnson related that buses were delayed at “chokepoints” at their destinations where it takes three to four hours to unload at times.¹⁶⁰ And Graham reported that buses would be held up to allow drivers to rest: “Many bus drivers have driven a long way and must rest prior to driving.”¹⁶¹ These factors alone could not have accounted for the shortage. More likely, the degraded environment prevented Smith and other federal officials from realizing the full scope of the need for evacuation by bus that even 1,100 buses could not satisfy.

Airlift operations supplemented evacuations by the buses

The effort to evacuate New Orleans was greatly facilitated by the establishment of an air evacuation component at the New Orleans International Airport. This activity required significant coordination regarding obtaining aircraft and crews, passenger screening, security (crowd control), air traffic control, passenger boarding, availability of passengers for departure, and itinerary management. According to Air Transport Association (ATA) officials, late Thursday, September 1, Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson called the ATA President Jim May and said they had 25,000 people who needed to be evacuated.¹⁶² That night, airplanes from Washington, D.C. were in transit to New Orleans.¹⁶³ Friday morning, planes started arriving with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials, flight crews, volunteers, and supplies. Planes were loaded around the clock from that weekend through most of the following week. A total of 13,000 evacuees were moved using 129 airplanes.¹⁶⁴

Despite their overall success, airlift operations needed to feed into an overall management system. There were times when the military and the private carriers were duplicating efforts. Moreover, the coordination of all the parts was complex. For example, there were no pre-existing contracts in place for air support.¹⁶⁵ Landstar asked carriers like Delta, Jet Blue, Spirit, and approximately a dozen commercial airlines for help.¹⁶⁶ These airlines provided planes (“hot spares” or back-up planes) flight crews, and additional staff, asking at most for jet fuel reimbursement. In the future airlines may be interested in entering into a Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program (a contractual program where civil airlines

augment military operations during a crisis in exchange for Defense Department business).

Conclusion

None of this had to happen. The potential effects of a Category 4 or 5 storm were predictable and were in fact predicted. Declarations of mandatory evacuations — declarations that

could have resulted in a more complete evacuation — were delayed or not done at all. New Orleans’ decision to shelter instead of evacuate the population, as well as individuals’ reluctance to leave, further resulted in an incomplete evacuation. The thousands of people left in New Orleans suffered death or had to be rescued to await an evacuation that should have already occurred before landfall.



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Regarding the post landfall evacuation, neither the New Orleans Plan nor the state’s Emergency Plan expressly provided for the

protection of vital transportation assets to evacuate the City after flooding. State and local officials also failed to prepare for such an eventuality, regardless of the plans. Nor did the expert federal agency anticipate the needs of the state and city to bring to bear immediate relief. As DHS Secretary Chertoff observed, planning was not what it should be at DHS.¹⁶⁷ Despite years of recognition of the threat that was to materialize in Hurricane Katrina, no one — not the federal government, not the state government, and not the local government — seems to have planned for an evacuation of the city from flooding through breached levees. Having failed to anticipate these needs, poor communications that hampered situational awareness, hours of service limits, security needs, and logistical problems further delayed the deployment of buses to evacuate the city. ■



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- ¹ State of LA and U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, Louisiana Citizen Awareness & Disaster Evacuation Guide [hereinafter *LA Evacuation Flyer*]; *see also*, State of LA, Emergency Operations Plan, (Apr. 2005) [hereinafter *LA State Plan*]; Supplement 1A: Emergency Operations Plan: Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Evacuation and Sheltering Plan (Rev. Jan. 2000) [hereinafter *LA State Evacuation Plan*].
- ² City of New Orleans, Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, (2004) at 51 [hereinafter *New Orleans Plan*].
- ³ *Id.*
- ⁴ *Id.*
- ⁵ *Id.* at 54.
- ⁶ *Id.* at 48.
- ⁷ *Id.* at 50.
- ⁸ *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the State of Mississippi Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (2005) at 63-64 (statements by Haley Barbour, Governor of MS, and Robert R. Latham, Jr., Exec. Dir., MS EMA) [hereinafter *Dec. 7, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*].
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ *Id.* at 34 (statement of Robert R. Latham, Jr., Exec. Dir., MS EMA).
- ¹¹ *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the State of Alabama Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (2005) at 46 (statement of Bob Riley, Governor of AL) [hereinafter *Nov. 9, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*].
- ¹² *Id.* at 122-123 (statement of Bruce Baughman, Dir., AEMA).
- ¹³ Director's Brief, Director of MS Emergency Management Agency, Brief as of 1900 hours, Aug. 28, 2005 (MEMA -0010688) (Aug. 28, 2005) at 3.
- ¹⁴ *Dec. 7, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 2 (written statement of Brent Warr); *see also id.* at 157 (statement of Benjamin J. Spraggins, Dir., Harrison County EMA).
- ¹⁵ *Id.* at 64, 74 (statement of Haley Barbour).
- ¹⁶ Director's Brief, Director of Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, Brief as of 1900 hours, Aug. 28, 2005 (MEMA -0010688) (Aug. 28, 2005) at 3.
- ¹⁷ *See generally*, Director's Brief, Director of Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, Brief as of 0430 hours, Aug. 29, 2005 (MEMA -0010696) (Aug. 29, 2005).
- ¹⁸ September 27 hearing at 68-9.
- ¹⁹ *Id.* at 70.
- ²⁰ Meeting Summaries, FEMA Regional Emergency Liaison Team Conference Calls (Aug. 28, 2005 – Sept. 02, 2005).
- ²¹ Baldwin County, AL, Hurricane Katrina Time Line of Events (Doc. No. 002553AL). The notation on the Time Line reads "volunteer evacuation" which Select Comm. Staff interpreted as a "voluntary evacuation."
- ²² Memo to Files, Alabama Emergency Management Agency EM/2000 Tracker System message 05-1675, (Aug. 28, 2005). Two days before the request for a mandatory evacuation in Alabama, AEMA officials had already requested transportation assistance for purposes of coordinating evacuation traffic flow out of Florida. Memo to Files, Alabama Emergency Management Agency EM/2000 Tracker System message 05-1611, (created Aug. 26, 2005; completed Aug. 28, 2005).
- ²³ Press Release, Office of Gov. of AL, Governor Riley Orders Evacuation for Parts of Mobile and Baldwin Counties (Doc. No. 002580AL); Press Release, Office of Gov. of AL, Governor Riley Orders Evacuation for Parts of Mobile and Baldwin Counties (Aug. 28, 2005), *available at* http://www.governorpress.alabama.gov/pr/pr-2005-08-28-02-katrina_evac_order.asp (last visited Jan 21, 2006).
- ²⁴ *Nov. 9, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 28 (statement of Bob Riley).
- ²⁵ Memo to Files, Evacuee Population Presently in AL by County as of 9/28/05, AL Emergency Management Agency (Oct. 10, 2005) (Doc. No. 002576AL).
- ²⁶ *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the State of Louisiana Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (2005) at 67 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco) (Blanco: "I am very happy to talk about our evacuation process, because it is the one thing that we did masterfully.") [hereinafter *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*]; *id.* at 94 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Governor of LA) (Chairman Davis: "This was the most successful evacuation you ever had, right?" Blanco: "Absolutely without a doubt.").
- ²⁷ *Id.* at 68-69 (statement of Jeff Smith, State Coordinating Officer and Deputy Dir., LA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness).
- ²⁸ *Dec. 7, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 61 (statement of Haley Barbour).
- ²⁹ *See* Audio recordings of Hurricane Katrina Conference Calls, Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center (Aug. 26-28, 2005).
- ³⁰ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 138 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco).
- ³¹ *Id.* at 88 (statement of Jeff Smith). However, despite this insistence that forcing people out of their homes prelandfall was not an option, it was apparently still a very live option post landfall and may have been carried out, even if not ordered. *See* E-mail correspondence from John Jordan, Military Assistant to then FEMA Director Michael Brown, to Michael Brown, et al. (Sept. 4, 2005) (10:33 a.m.) ("Appears state is reluctant to execute a true mandatory evacuation – i.e., forced if necessary. Therefore, State is pushing for shelters (includes all life support) in [New Orleans] to house citizens that will not leave voluntarily."); *see* E-mail correspondence from John Jordan, Military Assistant to then FEMA Director Michael Brown, to Michael Brown, et al. (Sept. 5, 2005) (9:13 a.m.) ("Governor Blanco has decided not to force any evacuations in New Orleans. Resident are still encouraged to evacuate. Buses were sent through NO on previously in deified evac routes today and no additional residents would board buses for voluntary evacuation. It appears that the evacuation phase of operations is winding down, or may be completed. Since FEMA did not anticipate reversal of decision for mandatory evacuation, crisis-action planning is now underway to provide this support."); *see* E-mail correspondence from John Jordan, Military Assistant to then FEMA Director Michael Brown, to Michael Brown, et al. (Sept. 5, 2005) (10:04 a.m.) ("Evacuations are slowing to a trickle."); *see* E-mail correspondence from John Jordan, Military Assistant to then FEMA Director Michael Brown, to Michael Brown, et al. (Sept. 6, 2005) (11:17 a.m.) ("Decision by Governor Blanco to not force any evacuations in New Orleans remains in place. Mayor of New Orleans is not forcing evacuations in NO and is not prohibiting residents from returning. Residents are still strongly encouraged to evacuate. . . . [S]ince NO is not being fully evacuated, requirements exist to provide all commodities to the remaining population."). *See also* *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Voices from inside the Storm Before Select*

- Comm.*, 109th Cong. (2005) at 18 (statement of Terrol Williams) (“I was [in my mother’s home] for about a week until September 8th or so, at which point a rescue crew comprised of State and local police as well as armed military officers forced me to evacuate. They arrived in a truck and two tanks and confiscated my weapons. I didn’t resist them, and the officers weren’t rough with me The rescue team took me to the Convention Center . . . and from there I was immediately taken by helicopter to the airport. The next morning I was put on a Delta 757 airplane. . . . Passengers weren’t told where they were going until after the plane had taken off.”) [hereinafter *Dec. 6, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*].
- ³² See ALA. CODE §§ 31-9-6 (4); 31-9-8 (4); 31-9-14 and 31-9-15 (2005).
- ³³ *Id.* at 22 (statement of Bob Riley).
- ³⁴ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 65 (statement of Hal Rogers) (“Saturday evening at 7:30, Max Mayfield, the head of the National Hurricane Warning Center, personally, for the second time in his 36-year career, personally, called the mayor [of New Orleans] and the [Louisiana] Governor, all the Governors, by phone to reiterate the severity of this upcoming storm. 8 p.m., Mayfield telephones Mayor Nagin.”); see also *id.* at 72 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco) (“On Saturday morning, indeed, Max Mayfield didn’t call until – in fact he didn’t call until Saturday night.”).
- ³⁵ Press Conference by C. Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans, and Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Governor of LA, MSNBC, et al. Aug. 28, 2005 (Blanco: “Just before we walked into this room, President Bush called . . . and asked me to please ensure that there would be a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans.”) [hereinafter Nagin-Blanco Press Conference].
- ³⁶ Public Advisory, National Weather Center (New Orleans, LA), Urgent Weather Message: Devastating damage expected (Aug. 28, 2005; 10:11 a.m. CDT).
- ³⁷ Interview of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, CNN Saturday Night, (Aug. 28, 2005) (8:00 p.m. ET) (Blanco: “We are very concerned about the people in the City of New Orleans and some of the people in the region as well, who have not actually gotten the message. They went to bed last night thinking the hurricane was going to Florida. And some have just gotten busy in their day and not gotten – you know, had any media contact, and don’t even know this is happening. So, we’re hoping that by tonight, that they’re watching you and getting the message that it’s a real threat. It’s very serious. We want them to get out of town.”).
- ³⁸ *Id.*
- ³⁹ Gordon Russell, *Ground Zero*, TIMES-PIC. (New Orleans), Aug. 29, 2005 at 1.
- ⁴⁰ Interview of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, ABC News Good Morning America, (Aug. 28, 2005).
- ⁴¹ Interview of C. Ray Nagin, At Large with Geraldo Rivera, Fox News Channel, (Aug. 28, 2005) (10:00 p.m. ET).
- ⁴² *Id.*
- ⁴³ *Id.*
- ⁴⁴ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 74 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco).
- ⁴⁵ *Id.*
- ⁴⁶ Mark Schleifstein, *Katrina Puts End to Lull*, TIMES-PIC. (New Orleans) Aug. 27, 2005 at 1.
- ⁴⁷ Bruce Nolan, *Katrina Takes Aim*, TIMES-PIC. (New Orleans) Aug. 28, 2005 at 1.
- ⁴⁸ *Id.*
- ⁴⁹ Nagin-Blanco Press Conference.
- ⁵⁰ *New Orleans Plan* at 12.
- ⁵¹ *Id.* at 48, 50.
- ⁵² Nagin-Blanco Press Conference (emphasis supplied).
- ⁵³ *Id.* (emphasis supplied).
- ⁵⁴ Audio recordings of Hurricane Katrina Conference Calls, Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center (Aug. 28, 2005) (12:00 p.m.) (statement of Aaron Broussard).
- ⁵⁵ Nagin-Blanco Press Conference.
- ⁵⁶ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* (written statement of Jeff Smith). This figure was arrived at based upon the reported number of individuals evacuated by officials from New Orleans.
- ⁵⁷ *Id.* at 162 (statement of C. Ray Nagin).
- ⁵⁸ *Id.*
- ⁵⁹ *Dec. 6, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 23 (statement of Doreen Keeler).
- ⁶⁰ *Id.* 90 (statement of Doreen Keeler).
- ⁶¹ *Id.* at 49-50 (statement of Dyan French).
- ⁶² *Id.* at 61 (statement of Terrol Williams).
- ⁶³ *Id.* (statement of Doreen Keeler).
- ⁶⁴ *Id.* at 64 (statement of Leah Hodges).
- ⁶⁵ *Id.* at 137-138 (statement of Barbara Arnwine).
- ⁶⁶ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Sherriff Hingle, Plaquemines Parish Sherriff, in New Orleans, LA (Nov. 7, 2005).
- ⁶⁷ *Id.*
- ⁶⁸ *Id.*
- ⁶⁹ *Id.*
- ⁷⁰ Mobile County, AL, *Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan*, Mobile County Emergency Mgmt. Agency (July 1, 2004) at ESF1-11.
- ⁷¹ Baldwin County, *Emergency Operations Plan, Annex O: “Alabama Hurricane Evacuation Study, Technical Data Report for Mobile and Baldwin Counties”* (May 2001).
- ⁷² *New Orleans Plan* at 50.
- ⁷³ *Id.* at 45.
- ⁷⁴ *Id.* at 50, 24.
- ⁷⁵ *Id.* at 54.
- ⁷⁶ *Id.* at 55.

77 Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing at 172 (statement of Terry Ebbert, Dir. of Homeland Security, City of New Orleans).

78 See Audio recordings of Hurricane Katrina Conference Calls, LA State Emergency Operations Center (Aug. 26-28, 2005).

79 *Id.* (statement of Terry Ebbert).

80 Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing at 73 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco).

81 Dec. 7, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing at 62 (statement of Haley Barbour).

82 *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: The Role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (Sept. 27, 2005) at 67-69 (statements of Michael Brown and Gene Taylor) [hereinafter *Sept. 27, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*].

83 Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing at 74 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco).

84 Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Joseph Donchesse (Pres., LA Nursing Home Assoc.) in Baton Rouge, LA (Nov. 10, 2005).

85 See generally Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing (written statement of Jeff Smith).

86 John Simerman, *Breaches took toll: N.O. ruin greatly increased*, *ADVOCATE* (Baton Rouge) Dec. 31, 2005 at 1A, 8A [hereinafter *Breaches Article*].

87 Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Larry Ingargiola, St. Bernard Parish Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, in St. Bernard Parish, LA (Nov. 3, 2005).

88 *Breaches Article*, 1A; see also, Knight Ridder Tribune News, *Most Katrina Victims Older; many white*, *ADVOCATE* (Baton Rouge) Dec. 30, 2005 at 9A [hereinafter *Analysis Article*].

89 *Breaches Article* at 1A.

90 *Breaches Article* at 8A.

91 *Id.*

92 *Id.*

93 *Analysis Article* at 9A.

94 *Id.*

95 *Id.*

96 *Id.* (“The comparison showed that 42 percent of the bodies found in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes were recovered in neighborhoods with poverty rates higher than 30 percent. That’s only slightly higher than the 39 percent of residents who lived in such neighborhoods, according to the census data. Similarly, 31 percent of the bodies turned up in areas with poverty rates below 15 percent, where 30 percent of the population lived. The median household income in neighborhoods where Katrina victims were recovered was about \$27,000 a year, just under the \$29,000 median for the overall area. One-fourth of Katrina deaths fell in census tracts with median incomes above \$35,300. One-fourth of the area’s pre-storm population lived in tracts with median incomes above \$37,000.”).

97 Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Nicholas Gachassin, Jr., First Assistant Attorney General, LA Department of Justice, in Baton Rouge, LA (Nov. 6, 2005).

98 *Id.*

99 *Analysis Article* at A3.

100 *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, and the National Guard of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (2005) at 2 (written statement of R. Dennis Sirois), [hereinafter *Oct. 27, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*]; see also *id.* at 37 (statement of R. Dennis Sirois).

101 LA Nat. Guard, *Overview of Significant Events Hurricane Katrina* at 23-24 (Dec. 7, 2005) [hereinafter *LANG Overview*].

102 Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing (written statement of Jeff Smith).

103 See Interview by Select Comm. Staff with General Brod Veillon, LA National Guard Commander for Task Force Minnow, in New Orleans, LA (Nov. 3, 2005); see also Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Colonel Barry Keeling, LA National Guard Commander of Task Force Eagle, in New Orleans, LA (Nov. 3, 2005).

104 Nagin-Blanco Press Conference (Nagin: “At noon today, the Superdome will then be opened up as a refuge of last resort, where we will start to take citizens that cannot evacuate.”).

105 *LANG Overview* at 6.

106 See Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Jacques Thibodeaux (LtC, LA Nat’l Guard) in New Orleans (Nov. 3, 2005) [hereinafter *Thibodeaux Interview*]; see Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Mark Mouton (Col, LA Nat’l Guard) in New Orleans, LA (Nov. 3, 2005) [hereinafter *Mouton Interview*]; Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Scott Wells (Field Officer, FEMA) in Baton Rouge, LA (Nov. 9, 2005) [hereinafter *Wells Interview*]; see also E-mail correspondence from David Passey (Dep’t Homeland Security) to Cindy Taylor (Dep’t Homeland Security), et al. (Aug. 28, 2005) (Doc. No. DHS 007265) (“Seven trucks (5 water and 2 MREs) are less than 2 hours away from the Superdome.”).

107 *Thibodeaux Interview*; *Mouton Interview*.

108 *Id.*

109 *Id.*

110 *Id.*

111 Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing at 3 (written statement of C. Ray Nagin).

112 See *FEMA Chief Mike Brown* (NPR: All Things Considered broadcast, Sept. 5, 2005) (playing audio clip from CNN interview by Paula Zahn, CNN anchor, and Michael Brown, FEMA Director:
“Mr. MICHAEL BROWN (FEMA Director): We just learned about that today. And so I have directed that we have all available resources to get to that Convention Center to make certain that they have the food and water. And I’ll tell you...
Ms. PAULA ZAHN (CNN): But, sir, you’re not telling me that you just...
Mr. BROWN: ...also—and I will tell you...
Ms. ZAHN: ...learned that the folks at the Convention Center didn’t have food and water until today are you?
Mr. BROWN: Paula, the federal government did not even know about the Convention Center people until today [Thursday, Sept. 2,

2005].”); see *NBC Today Show* (NBC television broadcast Sept. 10, 2005) (New Orleans co-host, Lester Holt: “That’s right Campbell. If you’ll recall, Michael Brown, the head of FEMA, acknowledged it was about 24 hours after those first TV reports of people holed up here [the New Orleans Convention Center] without food, in need of water, that he found out about it. That opened him up to a lot of criticism.”); see, Editorial Opinion, *Bush: First the Head of FEMA; Would you trust your safety to Michael Brown?*, DAILY NEWS (Phila.), Sept. 7, 2005, at 17 (“Here was a clueless bureaucrat [Mr. Brown] who didn’t seem to believe the horror stories coming out of the New Orleans convention center.”); see, *Leadership: Some tragedy avoidable*, CHARLESTON GAZ. (W. Va.), Sept. 3, 2005, at 4A (“FEMA Director Michael Brown admitted that he did not know until Thursday that thousands of people had been stranded at the New Orleans Convention Center for days without water of foods, as well as in the Superdome. How could he not know? Anyone listening to local radio knew.”).

¹¹³ LA Nat. Guard, *Timeline of Significant Events Hurricane Katrina* at 7 (Dec. 7, 2005) [hereinafter *LANG Timeline*].

¹¹⁴ Thibodeaux Interview; Mouton Interview; *LANG Overview* at 23-24.

¹¹⁵ Thibodeaux Interview; Mouton Interview.

¹¹⁶ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Gordon Mitchell (LA State Police) in Baton Rouge, LA (Nov. 4, 2005).

¹¹⁷ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 200, 202 (statement of C. Ray Nagin). It is important to remember, however, that the school district is already a support agency for transportation under the New Orleans Plan.

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 201 (statement of C. Ray Nagin). There was evidence that a portion of the RTA bus fleet was saved by being moved to the wharf by the Mississippi River. Email from Leo Bosner to Linda Mammatt-Morgan, et. al., transmitting Final Version DHS 0230 Situation Report input for Sept. 2, 2005, Doc. No. DHS-FEMA-0051-03122-03151 at 03128 (Sept. 02, 2005). According to RTA General Manager William DeVille, 197 of the RTA’s 372 buses were destroyed. *Hearing on Rebuilding Highway and Transit Infrastructure on the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina: State and Local Officials Before House Subcomm. on Highways, Transit and Pipelines of the Comm. on Transportation and Infrastructure*, 109th Cong. (2005) (statement of William J. DeVille). Whether the buses were available or not, no drivers were apparently available.

¹¹⁹ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 201 (statement of C. Ray Nagin).

¹²⁰ Thibodeaux Interview; Mouton Interview.

¹²¹ *Sept. 27, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 57 (statement of Rep. Hal Rogers).

¹²² *Id.* at 58 (statement of Michael Brown).

¹²³ *Dec. 6, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 107 (statement of Charles Allen).

¹²⁴ E-mail correspondence from Tony Robinson, Response and Recover Division Director, FEMA, to Jeff Smith, Col. Dep. Dir. LA Off. of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, (Sept. 15, 2005).

¹²⁵ *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 131 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco).

¹²⁶ See generally Daily Video Teleconferences amongst officials dated Aug. 25 – Sept. 4, 2005 [hereinafter “Daily VTC”]. State and local officials from each of the impacted areas met daily with officials from, among other agencies, FEMA, and the National Hurricane Center.

¹²⁷ Memorandum of Spot Report regarding FEMA Co-ordination Calls, Doc. No. DHS-FEMA-00510001220–21 (Aug. 31, 2005).

¹²⁸ *Id.*

¹²⁹ *Id.*

¹³⁰ *Id.*

¹³¹ E-mail correspondence from Gary Jones, FEMA, to Edward Buikema, FEMA Acting Director for Response during Hurricane Katrina, (Aug. 31, 2005) (“Jack Colley just advised me that Gov Perry has not received a call from Gov Blanco regarding this plan [to move LA evacuees to the Houston Astro Dome]. Jack said he heard that she was going to make the call early this morning, again this has not happened.”).

¹³² *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* at 155-156 (statement of Kathleen Babineaux Blanco) (Chairman Davis: “One last question, when did you realize that the tens of thousands of people in the Superdome would have to be evacuated out of New Orleans . . . ?” Blanco: “I recognized it on Tuesday [Aug. 30], when I was able to do – well, I knew about it before, but I had, you know, with my own eyes, made an evaluation.”).

¹³³ Daily VTC (Aug. 30, 2005) at 10.

¹³⁴ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Phil Parr, Dep. Fed. Coord Officer, FEMA in Washington, DC (Dec. 8, 2005) [hereinafter “Parr Interview”]; see generally *Dec. 14, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing* (statement of Phil Parr).

¹³⁵ Parr Interview.

¹³⁶ *Id.*

¹³⁷ *Id.*

¹³⁸ *Id.*

¹³⁹ Daily VTC (Aug. 30, 2005) at 11-12.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.* at 14 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴¹ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Edward Buikema, FEMA acting Director for Response during Hurricane Katrina, in Washington, DC (Jan. 6, 2006) [hereinafter “Buikema Interview”].

¹⁴² Daily VTC (Aug. 31, 2005) at 3.

¹⁴³ *Id.* at 26.

¹⁴⁴ Daily VTC (Sept. 1, 2005) at 9.

¹⁴⁵ Executive Order, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Emergency Evacuation by Buses, Exec. Order No. KBB 2005-31 (Aug. 31, 2005).

¹⁴⁶ E-mail correspondence from Miles Bruder, LA State Official, to “All Gov. Staff” regarding co-ordination of bus service (Aug. 31, 2005).

¹⁴⁷ Daily VTC (Sept. 1, 2005) at 8.

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*; Executive Order, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Emergency Evacuation by Buses, Exec. Order No. KBB 2005-25 (Sept. 2, 2005). Note, this differs from the Executive Order issued on Aug. 31, 2005, in that it waves the commercial drivers license requirement for bus drivers.

¹⁵⁰ VTC (Sept. 1, 2005) at 9.

¹⁵¹ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁵² Parr Interview.

¹⁵³ Buikema Interview.

¹⁵⁴ VTC (Sept. 1, 2005) at 14.

¹⁵⁵ *See generally, Id.* Daily VTC (Sept. 2, 2005).

¹⁵⁶ *Id.* at 4-5.

¹⁵⁷ *Id.* at 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Id.* at 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ *Id.* at 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Id.* at 5.

¹⁶¹ *Id.* at 3.

¹⁶² Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Jim McVaney, Director of Government Relations for Air Transport Association, in Washington, DC (Oct. 24, 2005).

¹⁶³ *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

¹⁶⁷ *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: The Role of the Department of Homeland Security Before Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (Oct. 19, 2005) at 48 (statement of Michael Chertoff); *see also* H. R. Conf. Rep. No. 105-297, at 127 (1997) (appropriating \$500,000 for a “comprehensive analysis and plan of all evacuation alternatives for the New Orleans metropolitan area”); *see also* H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 106-379, at 151 (1999) (directing FEMA to develop an evacuation plan for the New Orleans area). Whatever plans resulted from these federal directives, they were clearly inadequate.



AP PHOTO/LAWRENCE JACKSON

"The one-two combination of a catastrophic hurricane and massive flood overwhelmed the normal disaster relief system. Some things worked well. But there were shortcomings that we must urgently address.

"This tragedy has emphasized how critical it is that we ensure our planning and response capabilities perform with seamless integrity and efficiency in any type of disaster situation – even one of cataclysmic nature."

Michael Chertoff
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Select Committee Hearing, October 19, 2005