

ACTIVITY REPORT ON HURRICANE KATRINA

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The first activity involving preparation for Hurricane Katrina was notification on August 27 – 28, 2005 which was the Saturday and Sunday prior to the Hurricane to all wildlife enforcement regions throughout the state, in particular to the northern regions. Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 were advised to have all wildlife agents prepare to respond in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They were instructed to fuel all vehicles and boats, have all maintenance activity done on those vehicles and boats, and to have them ready to travel. They were also instructed to acquire food, water, linens, clothing, personal effects and be prepared to stay in the hurricane stricken area for several days if need be, in our rescue operations that were anticipated.

After those instructions were given, we followed with instructions to have all wildlife enforcement agents that were assigned from Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 to assemble at the education center at Woodworth, south of Alexandria, on Monday, August 29, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. At that time, we had 14 agents from Region 1, 15 agents from Region 2, 19 agents from Region 3, and 14 agents from Region 4, totaling 62 agents with 31 boats that assembled at the education center at Woodworth at 9:00 a.m. At approximately 10:00 a.m., that caravan embarked to the State Police headquarters in Baton Rouge. We arrived at the State Police headquarters at approximately noon that day where we received an assessment of the damage that had been done. We were advised about the flooding and the conditions that existed in the New Orleans area. The group went ahead and proceeded from there with a state police escort, including one state police officer and four bridge inspectors in two pick-up trucks who preceded our convoy down I-10 toward New Orleans. We arrived in the Metairie/Kenner area that afternoon at approximately 4:00 p.m. due to delays we experienced where the bridge inspectors had to check the elevated portions of the highway just east of LaPlace, as well as the elevated portion of the highway over Lake Pontchartrain leading into the New Orleans area, to assure it was safe to travel and that no damage had been done from the Hurricane. After the bridge inspectors checked that for us, we proceeded into the New Orleans area. We made it to Causeway Blvd. and I-10 which was as far as we could travel due to water being over the interstate beyond that point. We also encountered at that location, personnel from the Shreveport Fire Department who had already arrived. We had a request for evacuation of a nursing home where there were about 50 residents on Power Blvd. which was very nearby this location. This request was submitted to us by State Police Troop B. We dispatched five boats and 10 agents to that nearby location to begin the evacuation of those people. We also had some requests from people shouting along the roadside asking for help for people with medical conditions or people who needed to be evacuated from houses or apartments where they were stranded due to the water. There were water levels in the neighborhoods at the lower elevations along the highway right there. We effected some rescues there. We sent some of the agents, Capt. Brian Clark and Sgt. Rachel Zechenelly ahead of our convoy to try to find a route around the water with our goal

being to try to get to the Superdome area to coordinate with other rescue workers congregated there, as well as to get some information about where we could deploy our forces and begin rescue operations. Once they had determined that a route could be taken going over the Huey P. Long Bridge, taking the I-90 East Expwy. over the Crescent City Connection into the Superdome area, we took that route and arrived at the Superdome shortly after dark. We met up with some fire rescue workers and some state police officers who advised us that the Elysian Fields area, New Orleans East area, St. Bernard Ave., and the intersection of I-10 and I-610 were underwater and a great many people were stranded in homes in those areas. We proceeded East on I-10 into the Elysian Fields area, St. Bernard Ave., I-10 and I-610 split and divided our forces into three groups. We deployed into those areas and launched our boats off of on-ramps and off-ramps of the interstate. There were some New Orleans Fire Department personnel who were engaged in rescue at that point. At one of those locations there was also one fire truck set up with a generator that had lights providing some visibility to us in the launch area. There was no lighting at the other two locations. We put boats in the water and began going out and rescuing people. At approximately 9:00 p.m., the fire department advised that they were going to discontinue operations for the night. They pulled back and turned over the operation to us. We continued with the operation and approximately an hour later, a few of the firefighters returned on their own and assisted us with directions and operations there.

Some of the problems we encountered were low visibility at night, a lot of downed power lines, a lot of underwater obstructions, vehicles that were underwater, debris that was everywhere, and large numbers of people shouting for help from the houses. We continued throughout the night to load, go out in the boats, load people in the boats and bring them back to the elevated portion of the interstate where we could get them up to a dry area. Initially, there were two vans that were being driven by two New Orleans Police Department officers who were coming down and picking up evacuees that we were getting out of the water. They were bringing the evacuees to shelter at the Superdome. They made a few runs during the night. Later on during the night, approximately 10 ambulances arrived at two of our evacuation points and picked up evacuees who had very serious medical conditions and transported them out. At this time, security concerns began to arise as one stabbing and two fights occurred among evacuees at the St. Bernard Ave. location. The wildlife agents at that location also reported to me that many of the evacuees were getting restless and anxious and were questioning when transportation, food and water would arrive. I instructed the agents to tell them we were doing everything we could and were working on getting transportation and more medical care. I also advised the agents to wear body armor if they were not already doing so and to stay in pairs to protect each other. However, this did leave a great many people with medical conditions who were unattended. We attended to them and made them as comfortable as we could, as well as continuing with rescues. Rescue operations went on until approximately 3:30 a.m. the next morning. At that point, I made the decision to stop for an hour or so to allow our agents to get a little rest and regroup somewhat. Therefore, at 3:30 a.m. we stood down and the agents slept on their truck seats or wherever they could lie down to rest for an hour or so. Just prior to daylight, we got up and began making more recoveries. There was a CNN reporter that was on

location there and I did a couple of interviews with CNN around midnight advising them of what we were doing and the numbers of people we were bringing out. At daylight the next day, we had approximately 300 to 400 evacuees at each of the locations. At one location, I believe St. Bernard Ave., we had an estimate of 500 evacuees there. At the other two locations we had an estimate of 300 to 400 remaining after some of them had been transported out. After daylight, in the morning, there were a couple of military vehicles or large transport vehicles, referred to as a deuce and a half, which arrived and made a few runs and picked up some evacuees. As it went on into the day, until approximately noon, we were not getting near enough ground transportation to move the evacuees that we already had, so we began taking some of our pickup trucks and loading evacuees in the backs of the pickup trucks and bringing them to the Superdome. This operation continued through the remainder of the day into the early afternoon. At that time, we began to pull our boats out of the water and to get ready to pull out of the area prior to dark. This was to allow our agents to rest since they had been up for approximately 36 hours by this time and to also regroup and try to get some organization and communications with the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) to determine what our next duties would be and to work on the transportation problem. The number of people evacuated during that 36 hour period, in my estimate, would be approximately 1,500 people at the three sites we performed evacuations. The problems that we encountered were officer security, people with many medical conditions, no ambulances or medical assistance to tend to their needs, and of course the overall problem with ground transportation for anyone we had evacuated from the areas. That concluded our operations for Tuesday. We stood down that evening at approximately 6:00 p.m. and ceased operations. Agents were sent back to whatever location they were staying to rest and prepare for the next day.

On Wednesday, August 31, 2005, at 7:00 a.m., we assembled at the Tanger Mall Outlet in Gonzales. At that time, we were joined by a contingent of 50 agents from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department who came to assist us with rescues. We began returning in convoy to the New Orleans area. Our instructions for that day were to go into the medical area around Tulane Medical Center, Charity Hospital and the Loyola/Perdido area to evacuate patients and staff from those hospitals. We arrived in that area about mid-morning and came in contact with personnel from the Shreveport Fire Department who were responsible for triaging those patients. They had a small area set up on a parking lot that was out of the water just near the Holiday Inn Hotel at Loyola/Perdido. Our mission was to launch our boats into the water, go into Tulane Medical Center and any other hospitals in that area, specifically Tulane and Charity, and to move the patients by boat from the hospitals to the area set up for medical evacuation. The plan was for ambulances to pick those patients up and move them out. We initially began moving patients out of Tulane Medical Center to the area and it wasn't very long before we were told by the Shreveport Fire Department to stop because no ambulances had arrived to transport patients from the location. While we stopped moving patients from the hospitals and were awaiting ground transportation for the patients, we went ahead and made more evacuations of residences and other people that needed help in that area. We also at that time, established a security perimeter around the medical evacuation point because we had a lot of evacuees who were assembling there and asking for water and

food, which was interfering with the medical staff who were trying to attend to the patients we had on the ground. We also were given instructions to tell people who were walking out of the water and those people we rescued from the water to go to the Convention Center which was a few blocks away. From there they were supposed to be taken from the Convention Center and evacuated. We transported some evacuees by truck to the Convention Center and encountered people throwing various objects down on us and on our vehicles from rooftops for no reason we could discern. This operation continued through the afternoon. We continued to wait on medical evacuations and at that point, mid-afternoon, we began to see this was not going to happen. We became aware of some large transport buses that were parked and under guard by the National Guard near the interstate in a parking lot. We contacted the OEP to see if those seven buses sitting, not being used for any purpose, could possibly come to our location to pick up the medical patients and staff and remove them from the area. After making this request to the OEP, we were initially told that we could have the buses. The authorization came down and we sent personnel up there to ask for the buses to be brought to our location. Initially a fireman went there and made the request and he returned and stated he had instructions from the National Guard guardsmen who were guarding those buses to put that information in writing, including the request for the buses, who the authorization had come from (Col. Smalley), and who was requesting it. I wrote a brief statement to that effect, signed it and sent it there. The fireman returned from that trip and stated they requested that I go and talk to them. I went back to the area with the fireman (we were traveling back and forth on a 4-wheeler) where the guardsmen were guarding the buses and was told by them that we could not have the buses because they had no authorization to release them and that those buses were on standby for "special needs people". Apparently, the special needs people are different in some degree from the medical patients we had that needed to be evacuated. At that point, I determined that it was futile to pursue the buses. We returned back to the evacuation area and began loading up the patients in our vehicles. We loaded them into the backs of our vehicles. We put our boats on the trailers and put wheelchairs and other medical equipment into the boats on the trailers and began preparations to evacuate them out of the area. We got all of the patients out of Tulane Medical Center. I believe about five ambulances showed up and moved five patients and their family members, leaving approximately 50 patients we transported in our vehicles. We had a large number of vehicles with ourselves, as well as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department personnel. We left that area just prior to dark and transported those patients to the triage location which at that time was at the Causeway Blvd. and I-10 area. It was well after dark by the time we got those patients there. The medical staff made the decision not to leave the hospital to go to the evacuation point. They sent patients and the medical staff remained in the hospital with the hope they would be evacuated on the following day. After depositing the medical patients at the triage location at Causeway Blvd., we returned to the Tanger Mall Outlet area, to the Baton Rouge area, and to the Carville area where agents were staying overnight. That concluded operations for that day.

On Thursday, September 1, 2005 we proceeded back to the New Orleans area with our same large convoy of LDWF wildlife agents and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department agents. Just prior to getting into the evacuation area, we were given

instructions from the OEP to stop and to standby and do not go into the area due to security problems, and until the State Police could get the area somewhat secured we were to hold off on any further evacuations. There were reports of gunfire, looting, and violence happening in the area we had worked the day before and in the Superdome area also. We complied with that order and at approximately noon we were given information that the area had been secured and it was okay to begin evacuations again. At that point, we went back into the hospital area and continued evacuations of Charity Hospital which was completed on that day. Also at that time, we acquired five school buses that were brought to the command post at Elmwood, off Clearview Pkwy. The school buses had been commandeered from throughout the state and ordered into the area to assist with evacuations. The five school buses were brought to the hospital evacuation point where the staff from Tulane, and the patients and staff from Charity were evacuated. There were also some evacuations from Lindy Boggs Hospital. There was a different group that had made some evacuations, so we did a partial evacuation of Lindy Boggs Hospital. The hospital evacuations were concluded at approximately 5:00 p.m. Some of the staff returned with us to our Elmwood command center to assist with our missions. Evacuations of the hospital area were completed that day.

Following hospital evacuations on Friday, and at this point, our force was growing by a number of wildlife enforcement agents from several other states. They began to arrive into the New Orleans area. We also had a number of volunteers that began coming in so we were able to assemble larger teams. On an average, we were sending out teams of approximately 30 men with approximately 20 boats that were being dispatched to different areas to work. We had wildlife enforcement agents from Texas who we mentioned earlier. We also had wildlife enforcement agents from Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, and North and South Carolina. Those are the ones that I am actually aware of that reported and worked with us in our operations. Through Friday, evacuations continued in residential areas. We worked again in the Elysian Fields area and the New Orleans areas east of New Orleans.

On Saturday and Sunday, September 3 – 4, 2005 we continued similar operations through those areas. On each of those days that we were evacuating people, there were approximately 800 – 1000 people who were evacuated.

On Saturday, September 3, 2005 we assembled at approximately 4:30 a.m. at the Tanger Outlet Mall where tetanus inoculations were given to the wildlife agents present. There was also nursing staff that went down to the Elmwood command center and gave tetanus inoculations to agents that were in that area, as well as other law enforcement personnel assisting us with our operations. According to Colonel Vidrine and the information I had, some of the inoculations given were tetanus and Hepatitis A. Other inoculations were strictly tetanus and I do not have records of who received what inoculations, but it would be safe to say that everyone who was working in the area on September 3, 2005 did receive a tetanus inoculation. At noon that day, I took off and did not report back to duty at the command center at Elmwood until the following day on Sunday, September 4, 2005. I returned there at approximately mid-afternoon and began supervising operations again.

On Monday, September 5, 2005 we had again staged a large number of wildlife enforcement agents. One of the operation plans requested was to have three boats prepared for the State Police so they could check radio towers. Apparently there was a miscommunication, because although we did have the boats prepared and sent over to the Troop B office to go on that mission, nobody at Troop B was aware of the request, so that mission was cancelled. We had requests to go and check different houses and specific requests were coming in for particular missions to certain houses. These requests were coming from the OEP or certain people with those types of requests. We had noticed most everyone in the downtown area that we encountered appeared to be involved in looting and leaving with stolen goods. There were reports from some of our agents of supposed New Orleans Police Department officers, or either people posing as these officers who were loading stolen goods and taking them from the area. This was also the same day there was a report of the hotel owner/operator in Hotel Amerihost being held hostage as items from his hotel were being looted. This was reported on WAFB TV 9 out of Baton Rouge later that day. We did have some specific information from some of the agents in the area who observed some of this activity. I believe there were some Tennessee agents who may have taken photographs of that activity and may have information to report on this. We had a request from the New Orleans Police Department requesting 25 – 30 boats to go evacuate some of their personnel. There were approximately 40 of their personnel who needed evacuating. There were requests for evacuations in the uptown area which included six families, as well as approximately 16 nuns around the Ursuline area at a convent. We received an evacuation request from Andrew Jackson High School for some students there which was taken care of. We also had in operation that day some amphibious vehicles that were brought in and helped immensely with evacuations from some of those areas still underwater. Amphibious vehicles are commonly referred to as ducks and would be a very essential and beneficial piece of equipment to have in the event we would ever have an evacuation of a flooded urban area in the future.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, September 6 – 7, 2005 we were concentrating primarily in the St. Charles area and the Carrollton area, also referred to as the Garden District. With flooding in that area, there were a number of residents who were still in their homes. We covered those areas coming in from different points of entry. Some entry points were from Tchoupitoulas St. and St. Charles Ave. We had buses staged there. We also had boats that came in from Jackson Ave., Louisiana Ave., Napoleon Ave., Jefferson and Nashville and performed a very detailed sweep of the whole St. Charles and Carrollton areas on these days. At that point, we were beginning to come into contact with a number of people who did not wish to be evacuated. They would decline evacuation making the decision to remain in that area. We had prior requests for specific addresses where people were supposed to be who needed evacuations. In some of those situations, we arrived and found that those people had already been evacuated. By Wednesday, September 7, 2005 it was becoming fairly common to find only those people remaining in the area who wished to remain there. All of those who wished to be evacuated had been evacuated. It was becoming somewhat repetitious to control and sweep these areas

again only to find the same people who no longer wanted to be rescued or all evacuations having been done.

Wednesday afternoon was my last day on assignment at the command post at Elmwood.

On Thursday, September 8, 2005 I returned to the Baton Rouge headquarters and began taking up my duties in the office.

This concludes the report on my activities from the date of the impact of the hurricane through the following week, up to September 8, 2005 when I returned to headquarters.

My observations of things that could be corrected in the event we would have this type of situation occur in the future are:

1. The primary problem we had was communication. Failure of the radio system caused us to have to resort to some alternatives, one of those being, we acquired some hand-held talk around radios/citizen band radios which were distributed among the teams of agents who were out working so that they could at least communicate with each other. Overall, communications was a great hindrance to us. I believe the radio system needs to be addressed so that we do not have this problem in the future.
2. The next problem we experienced was with follow-up support in the form of ground transportation. We were very able with our equipment, abilities, and training to remove people from the flooded areas and get them to areas that were accessible by vehicle. However, there was a great failure on the part of other agencies to provide ground transportation to us to transport the evacuees once they had been rescued from the area.
3. We did have adequate supplies of food and water supplied to our agents following the initial couple of days. It would probably have been beneficial in many cases to have a supply of food and water that we could have provided to evacuees in certain situations, but our agents entered into the rescue mission with supplies they had brought with them that were only adequate to take care of themselves for a couple of days. Food and water supply issues need to be addressed and make sure that they follow as they did this time with improvement in the next event of this nature.
4. Fuel considerations and consumption issues are very important. We did have fuel delivered to us on Tuesday, August 30 on-site the day after the hurricane. We continued to have fuel delivered throughout the operation. I can say the provisions of fuel were very adequate to keep us in operation. Fuel was provided by the Department of Agriculture.
5. Maps of the areas we were working would have been a great help to us. That was another deficiency we experienced. We did not have maps of the area adequate to

provide copies to all agents who were operating in the area. We had numerous requests from many of our agents and many of the other agents coming in from other states for maps which we were unable to provide. In the future, detailed maps of the city and area of operation, with street addresses, would greatly assist us in our mission.

6. Another problem encountered was confusion caused by the use of local names or common names for different areas or different buildings, hospitals, etc. For example, you find people in this area who refer to Charity Hospital as: 1) Big Charity; 2) Charity; or 3) Hotel Dieu. Other common names and local names referring to different places caused confusion because they did not match up to the proper names or street addresses displayed on maps. It would be very beneficial for us to get a clearer structure with maps and detailed directions to different areas with proper names so there will not be confusion between proper names and common names of buildings, hospitals, etc. Any of those types of clarifications beforehand to reduce confusion during operations would greatly benefit our mission.
7. Security concerns when operating high risk areas are a major issue. Proper firearms, protective gear, and training must be provided for future high risk areas of operation.
8. Hazardous materials and biological threat training and equipment must be provided for future operation in contaminated areas, as well as proper vaccines against common diseases which may be present in such areas.

This concludes my report and observations of activities from my perspective during Hurricane Katrina.