CENTRAL GULF COAST - Notable Weather Events

August 17, 1969 - Extremely intense Hurricane Camille makes landfall at Pass Christian, MS with sustained winds of 160 mph and gusts well over 200 mph. Central pressure at landfall was 909 Mb (26.84 inches). A massive storm surge of 22 feet occurred at Pass Christian. Camille killed 137 along the Mississippi Coast. Damage exceeded $1 billion for entire storm.

1927 Great Mississippi River Flood - An unusually wet period from August 1926 through the Spring of 1927 soaked the Middle Mississippi Valley. A period of excessive rainfall during the first three weeks of April proved to be a disastrous climax to the rainy period. In 19 hours on April 14-15, the New Orleans area received over 14 inches of rainfall, while much of Arkansas and southern Missouri received over 9 inches in a one week period. Baton Rouge exceeded its flood stage of 35 feet on February 12th and remained above flood stage until July 14th, a period of 153 days. The river at Baton Rouge crested at 47.8 feet on May 15th, nearly 2 feet higher than its previous record set in 1922, and a record that still exist today. On April 25th, the stage at New Orleans was at a record 21.0 feet. The main flood crest had not reached the city yet, and fears were mounting that this major commerce hub of the era was in danger of being inundated. By order of the Governor, the levee was dynamited at a point on the river 14 miles south of New Orleans, at Caernavon on April 29th. The effort lowered the river level one-half foot before the crest passed New Orleans on May 15th at 20.7 feet. Then entire levee system along the reach of the Mississippi River was decimated, and a large government effort was employed to restore and construct new and better structures for flood control. These efforts helped launch Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover into the White House in the ensuing presidential election. The impact of this flood was 16.5 million acres of land in seven states inundated and 246 people died. Over 600,000 people were driven from their homes and damages totaled $230 million in 1927 standards. The river was 80 miles wide in some places.

September 9, 1965 - The New Orleans area was still recovering from the affects of Hurricane Hilda of October 1964. On September 7th, Betsy began to move due west and crossed extreme south Florida and the Florida Keys as a Category 3 hurricane. Betsy then accelerated to the northwest and moved into Barataria Bay on the evening of the 9th. This placed New Orleans on the worst side of the storm and sending the storm surge up the Mississippi River and into Lake Pontchartrain. A storm surge of 10 to 14 feet caused New Orleans to suffer its worst flooding since the hurricane of 1947 and proved inadequacies in the levee protection system surrounding the area. Betsy claimed 81 lives in Louisiana and was the first United States hurricane to produce over $1 billion damage, thus becoming known as Billion Dollar Betsy. The affects of Betsy were also felt well inland after landfall. The potent hurricane moved up the Mississippi River into Baton Rouge, where maximum winds were 58 mph with gusts to 92 mph.

September 29, 1915: Grand Isle Hurricane - This devastating Category 4 hurricane moved over Grand Isle and into the Greater New Orleans area. Winds were measured at 140 mph at Grand Isle. 275 people were killed as the storm crossed southeast Louisiana. In Leeville, LA, only 1 out of 100 houses survived the storm.

April 24, 1908: Amite, LA to Purvis, MS killer Tornado - Tornadoes killed a total of 290 people in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Three F4 tornadoes accounted for most of the deaths and damage. Most of the town of Purvis, Mississippi was leveled to the ground. Only 7 of the 150 houses in town were left standing. The worst damage in Louisiana took place at Amite, where the path was said to have been over two miles wide. In Louisiana, at least 29 people were killed in the town of Amite, 9 killed in Pine and 4 killed south of Wilmer.

NWS FORECAST OFFICE
New Orleans/Baton Rouge

Area Information

- Nearly 3 million people in the forecast area.
- Shipping (#1 port system in the U.S.).
- 50 percent of all U.S. Agricultural exports/imports pass through New Orleans and Baton Rouge ports.
- Offshore Petroleum Exploration and Production.
- 27 percent of daily domestic natural gas and oil production originations in Louisiana or off its shores.
- The North Central Gulf of Mexico area is the only area off the coast of the United States with deep water port for offshore supertanker traffic.
- 8th Coast Guard District Headquarters - largest in U.S.
- Marine Forces Reserve National Headquarters.
- Seafood/Shellfish Industry.
- Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Interior, Justice, State, Transportation, Veterans Affairs and Treasury.
- Tourism and Gaming in southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi.
- Special Events (Mardi Gras, Sugar Bowl, Jazz Fest, Essence Festival, Bayou Classic, Super Bowl, Biloxi Seafood Festival and The Greater Baton Rouge State Fair).

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Photos courtesy of NOAA Library.

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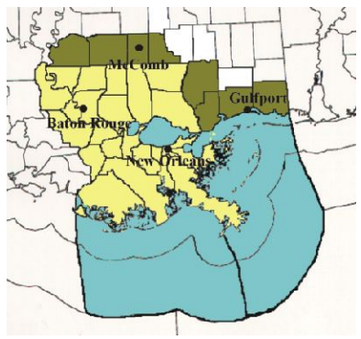
National Weather Service Forecast Office New Orleans/Baton Rouge

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminstration
National Weather Service

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE - Our Mission

The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, hydrologic and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national informational data base and infrastructure, which can be used by other government agencies, the private sector, the public and the global community.

NWS FORECAST OFFICE - New Orleans/Baton Rouge



The New Orleans/Baton Rouge National Weather Forecast Office (WFO LIX) has one of the longest histories of any Weather Service Forecast Office in the United States. The New Orleans office was established under the auspices of the Army Signal Corps of the United States Army on October 4, 1870 and was initially housed in a building at 281 Carondelet Street in New Orleans. The NWS Forecast Office New Orleans/Baton Rouge presently serves 22 parishes in southeast Louisiana and 8 counties in south Mississippi and adjacent coastal waters.

The Office Management Team oversees all office activities. Our Forecasters and Hydrometeorological Technicians work on rotating shifts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to produce all the forecast and warning products issued by the office. (Incoming meteorological and hydrological data, including river and stream gage information, also are monitored around the clock.) Electronic Systems Analyst and Technicians ensure that all electronic equipment is functioning properly.

Volunteer Cooperative Weather Observers provide daily local weather and river reports from around southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi. This network of volunteer observers is coordinated by the NWS Forecast Office in Slidell, Louisiana.

The NWS New Orleans/ Baton Rouge is centrally located in Slidell, Louisiana.

PROGRAMS

Forecasts, Watches, Warnings, Advisories and Outlooks

Our most important function is to issue weather forecasts, watches, warnings and advisories for the 30 counties and parishes in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana and adjacent coastal waters. Weather forecasts are issued two to four times daily for every county/parish, with updates as needed. Warnings, advisories, watches and outlooks are issued when hazardous weather is expected or is occurring. Hazardous weather events include tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, flooding, dense fog, high winds, extreme heat and cold, freezes and frosts.

Warnings & Advisories: issued when a hazardous weather is occurring or imminent, generally within the next 12 hours.

Watches: issued when hazardous weather could occur within 12 to 48 hours.

Outlooks (long-term): issued when event could occur beyond 1 or 2 days.

Specialized aviation forecasts tailored for pilots also are issued for the following southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi airports: Baton Rouge Metropolitan, Ryan Field; McComb / Pike / John E Lewis Field; New Orleans Armstrong International; and Gulfport-Biloxi Regional Airport.

Warning Coordination and Outreach

To ensure that we remain responsive to the needs of our customers, we support a large warning coordination and outreach program, which is led by the Warning and Coordination Meteorologist. Among the many program activities, we: (1) ensure the quality of our products; (2) ensure that the products are being received by our customers; and (3) work closely with our customers and partners in education and preparedness efforts to reduce threat to life and property from hazardous weather events such as hurricanes, severe weather and flooding.

Our customers include the general public, along with local, county and state emergency management agencies, officials and federal agencies..

Scientific Research

To improve forecast and warning services for our south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana service area, we are involved in various science research projects, which are coordinated by the Science Operations Officer. Given our convenient location co-located with Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center, we are able to collaborate with hydrologists.

Research projects range from observational studies- designed to increase our understanding of how heavy rainfall occurs over the Central Gulf Coast to developing local, small-scale models of the atmosphere customized for our area.

HOW THE PUBLIC RECEIVES OUR PRODUCTS

There is a wide range of dissemination systems available for the public to receive our products (forecasts, watches and warnings). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR) remains the primary way of receiving the fastest and most up-to-date weather information.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) receives specific hazardous weather warnings via NOAA weather radio, then relays those warnings directly to all TV and radio stations for automated dissemination and broadcast. Parish/County and local emergency management agencies receive our warnings via specialized software packages such as the Emergency Management Weather Information Network (EMWIN) and NOAA Weather Wire Service.

Our routine, daily products (forecasts, climatological summaries, weather observations, etc.) are available to the public, TV and radio stations across southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi. The internet also continues to be an important and growing source of weather information.

THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

The technology available to forecast offices has increased dramatically since the early 1990s. The big improvement in technology coincided with the National Weather Services modernization and associated restructuring, which was completed by the year 2000.

During the modernization, powerful "Doppler" radars were deployed, providing radar coverage across the nation, while allowing forecasters to diagnose potentially severe storms by examining their structure and internal motions.

The NWS New Orleans/Baton Rouge Doppler radar is located in Slidell, Louisiana.

The Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) is a state-of-the-art computer system deployed at the NWS New Orleans/Baton Rouge Forecast Office in the late 1990s. Forecasters use this system to view numerous meteorological data sets simultaneously. The system allows forecasters to compare observations, satellite and radar data to computer model forecast data, in order to produce more accurate forecasts. The new LINUX and IBM technology is currently being introduced.

NOAA Weather Radio 2000 also was deployed in late 1998. This automated voice system disseminates weather warnings more quickly than the previous manually produced broadcasts.

Forecasters and Hydrometeorological Technician use AWIPS to view multiple sets.