

Name _____



Hurricane Katrina, August 2005

By Joyce Furstenau

Topping the ten worst disasters of the last hundred years is Hurricane Katrina. Many of the areas hit have yet to recover from its effects. Hurricane Katrina was the sixth strongest hurricane in history. It affected 90,000 square miles in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama.



The hurricane formed over the Bahamas and turned into a Category 1 hurricane by the time it hit Florida. It got stronger as it traveled across the Gulf of Mexico. It made its second landfall off the coast of southeast Louisiana on Monday, August 29, 2005. It had become a category 4 hurricane by then. The storm surge that followed caused destruction from central Florida to Texas. New Orleans, Louisiana experienced the worst damage.

The weather service warned people of the tropical monster that was heading towards New Orleans. Residents were told to expect power outages. They were told they might lose their rooftops and to expect water shortages. The National Hurricane Director was very concerned. He personally called the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi. He even called President Bush at his ranch in Texas. He spoke directly with New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin. Nagin issued an evacuation order for his city. Most people left. About eighty percent of the population evacuated. The estimate was that around 100,000 people remained. Some were stranded tourists; others did not own a car and had no way out. Those who were not able to leave were instructed to go to the New Orleans Convention Center and the Superdome.

When the storm hit New Orleans, the winds speeds rose up to 145 mph. The storm surge that followed was even worse. It destroyed nearly 40,000 homes in St. Bernard Parish alone. It leveled the seaside

communities of Biloxi and Gulfport in Mississippi. In South Diamondhead, Mississippi, two hundred homes were washed away.

The levee system in New Orleans gave way under the force of the storm surge. One by one water pressure destroyed the levees. The water pressure from Lake Pontchartrain was too much for the pumps. Water began to fill the city streets. By Monday night, low-lying neighborhoods were flooded. People who stayed behind had to find high ground to keep from drowning. Many did not survive this final blow. In the end, nearly eighty percent of the city of New Orleans was flooded.

By Tuesday, the entire nation was shocked by the television footage of the most damaging hurricane in U.S. history. More than 50,000 people were stranded in the Convention Center without water, proper toilet facilities, or food. The situation was becoming even more desperate. They were cooped up like this until Saturday, September 3, when the buses finally began to leave town.

There were a total of 1,836 deaths from the effects of Katrina across seven states. Unclaimed and unidentified bodies lay in makeshift morgues for weeks, even months. The damage is still being assessed. It is estimated to top 300 billion dollars. Many survivors believe that it was more than the levee system that failed in this disaster.

Several lessons were learned from this storm. Many changes have been put into place should another storm of this magnitude be forecast. Mayor Nagin announced mandatory evacuation orders for any hurricane above a category 1. Provisions for evacuation transportation has been fine-tuned should the need arise.

Hurricane Katrina, August 2005

Questions

- _____ 1. Where did the hurricane begin forming?
- A. near the Bahamas
 - B. near Mexico
 - C. near Hawaii
 - D. near Cuba

