



Louisiana Recovery Efforts Five Years After Katrina and Rita

Five years ago, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated communities throughout Louisiana, and along the Gulf Coast. Under the leadership of the Obama Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has taken important steps to improve the pace of ongoing recovery efforts and help rebuild the communities that are the economic engines of the Gulf Coast. All of these efforts have focused on finding innovative solutions to better support state and local officials, remove bureaucratic red tape that delayed recovery projects for years, and give residents the assistance they need to move forward.

Over the past five years, more than 91,000 displaced Louisiana families, formerly residing in FEMA-provided housing, have returned to longer-term housing. More than \$8.9 billion has been obligated to Louisiana to save lives, protect public health and safety, prevent damage to public and private property, and permanently repair or replace infrastructure damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes.

In the last 18 months, more than 4,349 households have found longer-term housing, and more than \$2.33 billion has been funded by the Administration to continue the repair and rebuilding of more than 2,700 projects in Louisiana. This is due in large part to this Administration's commitment to putting innovative solutions in place.

STREAMLINED PROCESS TO ACCELERATE RECOVERY

In the years immediately following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many recovery projects were held up because of disputes and an inefficient process for settling them. To make this process quicker and fairer, the Obama Administration took important steps to free up funds to get projects moving forward again.

Joint Public Assistance Decision Teams. On March 5, 2009 FEMA established two joint public assistance decision teams to help resolve disputed projects that were stalled in Louisiana. The teams were comprised of technical and policy experts from FEMA and the state to execute quick and fair resolutions to disputes for public works projects and determine which projects were eligible for federal aid. Due to the significant efforts of these two teams, the pace of funding has been greatly accelerated to applicants. Since March 2009, more than 173 projects have been resolved to fund the repair and replace facilities such as fire and police stations, schools and libraries; and other infrastructure critical to the recovery of communities in the Gulf.

Neutral, Third-party Decision Making to Expedite Projects. On August 6 2009, Secretary Napolitano announced a new arbitration process to expedite resolution of outstanding public assistance projects from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as an alternative to the previous bureaucratic appeals process. Under this new process, neutral, third-party panels adjudicate disputes – allowing some of the most difficult and complex disputes to get resolved. To date, 14 Louisiana projects have been submitted through to Arbitration process, 12 projects have been resolved and some of these resolutions have included freeing up \$475 million in funding to Louisiana to replace Charity Hospital.

ECONOMIC RELIEF FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

To provide greater economic relief for cash-strapped local governments hit hard by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, in March 2009 Secretary Napolitano announced additional flexibility for an existing federal program that provides loans to communities after a disaster to help them continue providing key municipal services that they otherwise would not be able to afford.

Under the Obama Administration's initiative, Congress gave FEMA the authority to cancel the loans, called Special Community Disaster Loans, for eligible local governments in Louisiana and Mississippi that received them after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Under the rules set by Congress, in order to be eligible for the loan cancellation, governments' revenues during the three fiscal years after the disaster must have been insufficient to cover their operating budgets. For more information please visit www.fema.gov.

INITIATIVES

Under the leadership of Administrator Fugate, FEMA has also launched new initiatives to better serve the American people and their communities before, during and after a disaster.

Expanding Access to Critical Information

In April 2010, Administrator Fugate announced the launch of FEMA's new mobile Web site, m.fema.gov. The mobile Web site makes it easier to access critical information regarding emergency preparedness and what to do before and after a disaster right on a Smartphone. The mobile Web site was further expanded in July to include a new feature to the m.fema.gov mobile platform, making it easier for disaster survivors to apply for help directly from FEMA and other federal partners through their web enabled mobile phone devices such as BlackBerry®, Apple iPhone®, and Windows Mobile® device. As Smartphones become cheaper and more prevalent, and wireless networks more resilient, these devices are becoming more than just simple communication tools – they can be life lines during emergencies.

Planning for the Needs of All Members of the Community

Administrator Fugate forged a working relationship with the National Commission on Children and Disasters in an effort to focus on planning for children in disasters. As an outcome of his meetings with the Commission, Administrator Fugate created the FEMA "Children's Working Group" to explore and implement planning and response strategies specific to children throughout the agency and ensure that during a disaster the unique needs of children are not only considered, but fully integrated into how FEMA administers this support to states and the public.

Under Administrator Fugate's direction, FEMA established the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination to increase capacity for meeting the emergency preparedness and disaster response and recovery related access and functional needs of children and adults with disabilities.

Katrina and Rita Recovery: Louisiana 2005-2010

- ◆ **1,446,927 Louisianaans registered for assistance**
- ◆ **\$5.8 billion distributed to families and individuals**
- ◆ **\$3.7 billion reimbursed to Louisiana to save lives, protect property and remove debris**
- ◆ **\$5.2 billion obligated to help communities repair and rebuild**
- ◆ **\$521.7 million to mitigate against future damages**

For more information on other initiatives, visit www.fema.gov/rebuildinglives.