Louisiana Katrina/Rita Recovery

“Our commitment to the Gulf Coast remains unwavering and our determination to bring to completion many of the projects is still underway. My goal is to eliminate the red tape, help rebuild now and rebuild the region stronger than ever.”

DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano

Since the beginning of the Obama administration, significant progress has been made toward the continuing recovery efforts in Louisiana following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Within the past year more than $2.33 billion has been funded toward the continued repair and rebuilding efforts of more than 2,700 projects in Louisiana communities, due in large part to the two innovative, joint public assistance decision teams established by Secretary Napolitano following her visit to the Gulf Coast in March 2009. Additionally, 99 percent (more than 91,000) households displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita have found longer-term housing solutions.

Public Assistance

Committed to strengthening and accelerating rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast communities recovering from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA has taken decisive action to improve recovery and assist individuals still affected by these disasters. More than $2.3 billion in Public Assistance funding has been awarded to the State of Louisiana for important Hurricanes Katrina and Rita recovery projects. These funds will help Louisiana students get back into their schools and provide citizens better access to important services such as protection through police and fire stations, improvements to sewer and water systems and access to public infrastructure such as playgrounds and recreational facilities.

Joint Public Assistance Teams

In coordination with the State of Louisiana, FEMA established two joint public assistance decision teams to aid in the resolution of disputed projects—the Joint Expediting Team and the Unified Public Assistance Project Decision Team (Decision Team), both announced on March 5, 2009.

The Joint Expediting Team, comprised of technical and policy experts from FEMA’s Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office and the State of Louisiana, was established to execute quick and fair resolutions to disputes under the Public Assistance program.

“2009-2010* Accomplishments Louisiana

Public Assistance

- Two joint teams established to resolve disputed Public Assistance Projects
- 173 disputed projects resolved
- More than $2.3 billion in total Public Assistance funding in these sectors:
  - Education: $940.4 million
  - Public Works: $277.4 million
  - Public Safety & Protection: $201.5 million
  - Health Care: $96.4 million
  - Public Infrastructure: $704.8 million
  - Debris Removal/Emergency Protective Measures: $114.0 million

Mitigation

- Since January 2009, more than $196 million in funding Hazard Mitigation projects, including home elevation and land acquisitions, has been obligated.

Individual Assistance

- 4,374 of households transitioned to permanent housing
- In June of 2009, FEMA announced very-low-cost mobile homes and park models through its Sales-to-Occupants program, ensuring that many more occupants would qualify to purchase their homes.

* January 20, 2009 – August 20, 2010

“The Town of Grand Isle has been working closely with FEMA, and throughout our determination we have acquired a good working relationship. FEMA sees our needs firsthand and does the best to see that our goals are accomplished. Our progress is moving along thanks to the dedication, persistence and hard work that our elected officials and FEMA have done.”

Grand Isle Mayor David Camardelle

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano meets with state and local leaders in Louisiana during her March 2009 visit.
FEMA and DHS announced the following:

**Public Assistance and Mitigation Grant Funding for Major Projects**

Funds were awarded to help numerous K-12 and higher education facilities return to their pre-Katrina conditions. For instance, more than $150 million was awarded to repair replacement of facilities such as fire and police stations, schools like the Southern University of New Orleans and Holy Cross School, libraries and other infrastructure critical to the recovery of communities in the Gulf. Since March 2009, the Joint Expediting Team and the Unified Public Assistance Project Decision Team resolved 173 projects.

During the year, 14 Louisiana projects have been submitted through to arbitration process. Of those, 12 have already been resolved, either through judgments, dismissals or settlements.

Due to the significant efforts of these two teams, the pace of funding has been greatly accelerated to applicants. More than $100 million has supported the repair and replacement of facilities such as fire and police stations, schools like the Southern University of New Orleans and Holy Cross School, libraries and other infrastructure critical to the recovery of communities in the Gulf. Since March 2009, the Joint Expediting Team and the Unified Public Assistance Project Decision Team resolved 173 projects.

**Arbitration Panel**

On Aug. 6, Secretary Napolitano announced a new arbitration process to expedite resolution of outstanding public assistance projects stemming from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The new arbitration system is designed to further recovery efforts by providing final adjudication of disputes arising from public assistance projects by an independent, neutral panel of arbitrators. This process is an alternative to the current administrative appeals process. To date, a total of 14 Louisiana projects have been submitted through to arbitration process. Of those, 12 have already been resolved, either through judgments, dismissals or settlements.

A panel of arbitrators will be available to review certain disputes involving Public Assistance projects in excess of $500,000 arising from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Gulf Coast states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Multiple, third-party, neutral arbitration panels are established as required to meet the caseload demand. Each panel consists of three judges, independent of DHS. The Civilian Board of Contract Appeals will provide the primary pool of judges. The designated arbitration panel will consider all written statements and supporting documentation from the applicant, the state, and the FEMA regional administrator. Each arbitration panel is expected to make every effort to reach a decision, which will be determined by a majority, within 60 days.

**Public Assistance Sector Highlights**

Education: $940.4 million has been obligated to the state of Louisiana for K-12 public schools and universities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These funds will help numerous K-12 and higher education facilities return to their pre-Katrina conditions. For instance, more than $150 million was awarded to...
the Recovery School District for the Quick Start Program.

**Public Works:** Approximately $277.4 million in funding has been given to communities for public works projects.

**Public Safety & Protection:** $201.5 million has been obligated for public safety projects, including more than $57 million for the permanent facility replacement of the Plaquemines Sheriff’s Detentions Center.

**Health Care:** $96.4 million has been obligated for health care projects. $3.6 million was obligated to the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center to reimburse for contents, equipment, fire alarm systems, and mold remediation for damaged facilities, including the Lions Eye Clinic, School of Dentistry Clinic, and Medical School.

**Public Infrastructure:** More than $704.8 million obligated for public infrastructure projects, state management costs that enable the state to administer and manage the public assistance grants for projects such as the rebuilding of Robert E. Smith Library on Canal Boulevard and the restoration of roadways in New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish and emergency protective measures.

**Debris Removal/Emergency Protective Measures:** $114.0 million has been obligated for debris removal and emergency protective measures.

### Mitigation

Through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program FEMA has actively helped Louisiana prepare for potential future disasters. 2009-2010 accomplishments include:

- Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF) supports the federal response after a disaster—it is vital that its buildings are able to withstand strong hurricane winds to allow responders to bring emergency assistance without interruptions. More than $2 million in FEMA Hazard Mitigation funding is being provided to harden and retrofit LDAF buildings in Baton Rouge and Hammond.

- FEMA has released $9.5 million of a $32.6 million Hazard Mitigation Grant Program project to cover the costs of elevating structures to the Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) level or Base Flood Elevation (BFE) level, whichever is higher. These residential properties will also be retrofitted against high wind hazards to protect them from future storms.

- With the completion of digital flood insurance rate maps to the coastal parishes at the end of 2008, FEMA has been holding open houses and technical workshops, and attending city council meetings in 2009 to educate and inform residents on the importance of the new maps. The first of the coastal parishes, Tangipahoa, is scheduled to adopt their digital flood insurance rate map by July 22, 2010.

### Hazard Mitigation Plans

Part of the effort has involved the development of Hazard Mitigation Plans for communities throughout Louisiana. A requirement to qualify for the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is that the state and communities must have an approved Hazard Mitigation plan. When hurricanes Katrina and Rita made...
landfall, there were only four jurisdictions, one being the State of Louisiana, with approved plans. FEMA made over $23.5 million available for communities to develop and update their Hazard Mitigation plans. To date, there are 81 jurisdictions with approved plans.

## Individual Assistance

In response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA has assisted 1,498,722 disaster survivors with some form of housing assistance totaling over $5.7 billion. FEMA conducted the largest temporary housing operation in the history of the country providing temporary housing units (THUs) to 143,123 households throughout the Gulf Coast.

Since January 20, 2009, 4,374 households in Louisiana have moved out of FEMA temporary housing and into more suitable, longer-term, functional housing resulting in 99% of those originally housed, returning to longer-term housing.

On February 12, 2009, Secretary Napolitano announced that FEMA’s temporary housing program would be extended for an additional 60 days, where needed, until May 1, 2009 to provide additional time to help disaster survivors get back on their feet. On May 1, 2009, there were roughly 2,700 Louisiana households remaining in temporary housing units. With the close of the FEMA temporary housing program, the Administration understood that this was a difficult time for families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who were still working to transition from temporary housing to more permanent housing solutions. On June 5, 2009, FEMA and HUD worked with other parts of the federal government, along with state and local partners, to identify and implement new strategies and initiatives to ease the transition for the remaining families.

As of August 20, 2010, there were 707 Louisiana households still residing in temporary housing units as result of Katrina and Rita. Twenty households are pending the purchase of their unit and 56 are waiting to receive a donated unit from a nonprofit organization.

## Special Community Disaster Loan Cancellation

The Community Disaster Loan (CDL) Program provides operational funding to help local governments that have incurred a significant loss in revenue, due to a major disaster, that has adversely affected their ability to provide essential municipal services. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Congress established the Special Community Disaster Loan (Special CDL) program specifically to address the particular needs of the Gulf Coast communities affected by those storms.

In March 2009, Secretary Napolitano announced that FEMA proposed an amendment to its Special Community Disaster Loan (SCDL) regulations to include loan cancellation provisions to recipients in Louisiana and Mississippi who received SCDLs following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Special CDLs are 5 year loans. The loans come due 5 years after the issuance date of the applicant’s Promissory Note.
“The leadership within FEMA and our national government has begun to understand that there must be some flexibility in the application of the rules and regulations. FEMA resources have come in to help us restock our classrooms, our maintenance department, our school buses, and every aspect of our operation.”

Superintendent Doris Votier  
St. Bernard Parish Schools

“Quality of life in Jefferson Parish has always been an important factor to our citizens. As we recover from the major storms of 2005, FEMA has played an integral role by restoring playgrounds and fire stations, which contribute directly to the quality of life our residents expect.”

Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard

“Like most of southeast Louisiana, Hurricane Katrina totally damaged and devastated this post – we had close to 200 structures that were damaged or destroyed. Jackson Barracks – we’re going to come back. I think we are a good news story for the rest of the country. We probably have one of every FEMA public assistance project example taking place here.”

Major General Hunt Downer  
Louisiana National Guard, Jackson Barracks

FEMA published a proposed rule in April 2009 which included procedures and requirements for SCDL recipients to apply for cancellation of their loan. The comment period for the proposed rule closed June 2, 2009; FEMA received 68 comments.

The final rule, published in January 2010, finalized procedures and requirements for the SCDL recipients to apply for cancellation of their SCDLs. FEMA’s authority to provide cancellation of loans is limited to those applicants whose revenues during the three full fiscal year period following the major disaster are insufficient to meet their operating budgets, including additional unreimbursed disaster-related expenses of a municipal operation character.

Applicants are required to apply for loan cancellation through the state Governor’s Authorized Representative (GAR) before the due date of their loan. For more information please visit www.fema.gov.

**Recent Projects**

**Transportation:** The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) unveiled their new buses at an event Thursday, June 24, 2010. The buses replace 233 buses flooded beyond repair during Hurricane Katrina. FEMA has obligated $44.2 million to the RTA for the buses, and overall to date, a total of $121 million to the RTA.

The new buses are more fuel-efficient, which will reduce RTA’s future operations costs. They also are environmentally friendly, being cleaner-burning with fewer emissions than the previous fleet, and replace a large number of older buses with a smaller number of new buses better suited to the current transportation needs of the city.