

# **CAMPUS PUBLIC SAFETY PREPAREDNESS FOR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM HURRICANES AND EXPLOSIVES**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Lessons Learned

Preface .....	1 - 3
Listening Session .....	1 - 5
Summary of Lessons Learned.....	1 - 6
List of Participants.....	1 - 11

## Centenary College

Demographic Information .....	2 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	2 - 3
Plans.....	2 - 5
Command and Coordination .....	2 - 5
Equipment and Logistics .....	2 - 6
Communications.....	2 - 6
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	2 - 6
Recall and Staffing.....	2 - 6
Lessons Learned.....	2 - 6
Unmet Needs .....	2 - 7

## Delgado Community College

Demographic Information .....	3 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	3 - 3
Plans.....	3 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	3 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	3 - 5
Communications.....	3 - 6
Recall and Staffing.....	3 - 6
Lessons Learned.....	3 - 6
Unmet Needs .....	3 - 7

## Dillard University

Demographic Information .....	4 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	4 - 3
Plans.....	4 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	4 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	4 - 4
Communications.....	4 - 4
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	4 - 5
Recall and Staffing.....	4 - 5

Lessons Learned.....	4 - 5
Unmet Needs .....	4 - 5

### **Jackson State University**

Demographic Information .....	5 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	5 - 3
Plans.....	5 - 5
Command and Coordination .....	5 - 5
Equipment and Logistics .....	5 - 6
Communications.....	5 - 6
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	5 - 6
Recall and Staffing.....	5 - 7
Lessons Learned.....	5 - 7
Unmet Needs .....	5 - 7

### **Loyola University**

Demographic Information .....	6 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	6 - 3
Plans.....	6 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	6 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	6 - 5
Communications.....	6 - 6
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	6 - 7
Recall and Staffing.....	6 - 7
Lessons Learned.....	6 - 7
Unmet Needs .....	6 - 8

### **Louisiana State University**

Demographic Information .....	7 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	7 - 3
Plans.....	7 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	7 - 5
Equipment and Logistics .....	7 - 6
Communications.....	7 - 6
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	7 - 7
Recall and Staffing.....	7 - 7
Lessons Learned.....	7 - 7
Unmet Needs .....	7 - 8

### **McNeese State University**

Demographic Information .....	8 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	8 - 3
Plans.....	8 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	8 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	8 - 5
Communications.....	8 - 5

Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management .....	8 - 6
Recall and Staffing.....	8 - 6
Lessons Learned.....	8 - 6
Unmet Needs .....	8 - 7

### **Nicholls State University**

Demographic Information .....	9 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	9 - 3
Plans.....	9 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	9 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	9 - 4
Communications.....	9 - 4
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management .....	9 - 5
Lessons Learned.....	9 - 5
Unmet Needs .....	9 - 5

### **Tulane University**

Demographic Information .....	10 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	10 - 3
Plans.....	10 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	10 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	10 - 4
Communications.....	10 - 5
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	10 - 5
Recall and Staffing.....	10 - 5
Lessons Learned.....	10 - 6
Unmet Needs .....	10 - 6

### **University of New Orleans**

Demographic Information .....	11 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	11 - 3
Plans.....	11 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	11 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	11 - 4
Communications.....	11 - 4
Lessons Learned.....	11 - 4
Unmet Needs .....	11 - 5

### **University of South Alabama**

Demographic Information .....	12 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	12 - 3
Plans.....	12 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	12 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	12 - 5
Communications.....	12 - 5
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	12 - 5

Recall and Staffing.....	12 - 5
Lessons Learned.....	12 - 6
Unmet Needs .....	12 - 6

### **University of Southern Mississippi**

Demographic Information .....	13 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	13 - 3
Plans.....	13 - 5
Command and Coordination .....	13 - 5
Equipment and Logistics .....	13 - 6
Communications.....	13 - 7
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	13 - 7
Recall and Staffing.....	13 - 7
Lessons Learned.....	13 - 8
Unmet Needs .....	13 - 9

### **Xavier University**

Demographic Information .....	14 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	14 - 3
Plans.....	14 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	14 - 4
Equipment and Logistics .....	14 - 4
Communications.....	14 - 5
Staff and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) .....	14 - 5
Recall and Staffing.....	14 - 5
Lessons Learned.....	14 - 5
Unmet Needs .....	14 - 6

### **Georgia Institute of Technology**

Event Summary .....	15 - 3
Demographic Information.....	15 - 3
Chronology of Priorities .....	15 - 4
Plans.....	15 - 4
Command and Coordination .....	15 - 4
Communications.....	15 - 4
Lessons Learned.....	15 - 5

### **University of Oklahoma**

Event Summary .....	16 - 3
Pre-Game Security Arrangements .....	16 - 3
Response Considerations .....	16 - 4
Managing the Response.....	16 - 4
Post Event Review .....	16 - 5

### **Hurricane Rita: Lessons Learned**

Written by Donald D. Dixon, Chief of Police, Lake Charles, Louisiana .....	17 - 1
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## **Resources and Recommended Reading**

Resources .....	18 - 3
Recommended Reading.....	18 - 3

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

## PREFACE

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There are 4,000 Title IV Institutions of Post-Secondary Education in the United States serving about 15 million students and several million faculty, staff, and visitors each year. Our colleges and universities are responsible for \$80 billion in federal research and provide support functions such as super-conducting for multi-national companies.

Gulf Coast colleges and universities suffered massive infrastructure and economic damages from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Physical and economic losses to colleges and universities from Hurricane Katrina alone total an estimated \$2.5 billion. Gulf Coast institutions of higher education are major contributors to the economies and employers for the regions which they serve.

Campus public safety agencies are charged with protecting the buildings and other facilities of colleges and universities in the Gulf Coast region. More importantly, these campus public safety agencies are responsible for protecting the lives of the many students, faculty, staff, and visitors to these institutions of higher learning.

In early September of 2005, shortly after Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans, Jeff Allison, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Special Advisor to the FBI Office of Law Enforcement Coordination, was attending a focus group meeting sponsored by the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, Inc., (IACLEA) in Washington D.C. The purpose of the focus group meeting was to identify current and future training needs to help campus public safety departments prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism on college campuses. During this meeting, Allison initiated preliminary discussions with IACLEA staff and Domestic Preparedness Committee leaders to explore whether DHS grant funds could be reprogrammed to support a Lessons Learned Listening Session specifically for the Gulf Coast Schools. The concept was that a catastrophic event such as Hurricane Katrina presents many of the same challenges as a WMD/terrorist event: the need to evacuate and protect large numbers of students and others; the need to protect property and maintain order; and the need for mutual aid and cooperation among law enforcement, first responder, and other groups. One of the campus public safety leaders who happened to be attending the focus group meeting in Washington, D.C., Police Chief David Benada of McNeese State University, responded to the call and graciously agreed to have his institution serve as host for this session. Two weeks later, Chief Benada's campus would be hit by Hurricane Rita.

The scope of this meeting was expanded after the suicide bomber incident at the University of Oklahoma and an incident involving home-made explosives at Georgia Tech to include debriefings and Lessons Learned presentations for those two events.

Once the authorization was received by DHS to proceed with the meeting, IACLEA and its grant sponsors at DHS reached out to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Listening Session became a jointly sponsored event.

We thank Jeff Allison for his foresight and vision; J. Scott Whitney, DHS program manager, for his support; Chief David Benada for his invaluable assistance; and the IACLEA Board of Directors and its Domestic Preparedness Committee for working together to ensure a successful session.



We also wish to thank the campus public safety executives (see the List of Participants, p. 1-11) who participated in the event and completed surveys in advance to document actions taken before, during and after the hurricanes.

It is our hope and desire that this Lessons Learned report will serve as a guide to help campus public safety agencies take the necessary steps to protect the lives and property of the college and university communities they are committed to serve in the face of future catastrophic events, whether natural or man-made.

It is also important for policymakers other than campus public safety executives to understand that colleges and universities are communities within the larger geographic community in which they are located. To the extent that we are able to protect the campus community, they may provide valuable incident response and recovery assets that add a protective layer to the larger community.

In other words, if campus communities have the wherewithal to withstand the storm, they become a huge asset to the larger community during response and recovery. If they do not withstand the storm, they become another entity in need of rescue.



***Gibson Hall at Tulane University***

## **LISTENING SESSION**

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On March 21, 2006, IACLEA, the U. S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) convened a two-day listening session for campus public safety leaders from higher education institutions affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Hosted by McNeese State University in Lake Charles, LA, the purpose of this two-day session was to identify and share lessons learned that might be applied to planning for future catastrophes, whether natural or man-made.

In addition to attendees from the sponsoring agencies, representatives from numerous institutions were invited to participate in the conference, including:

- Centenary College,
- Delgado Community College,
- Dillard University,
- Georgia Tech,
- Jackson State University,
- Louisiana State University,
- McNeese State University,
- Nicholls State University,
- University of Oklahoma,
- Tulane University,
- University of New Orleans,
- University of South Alabama,
- University of Southern Mississippi, and
- Xavier University.

Participants were asked to present a summary of the most important issues they encountered leading up to and in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In addition, they were asked to provide written responses addressing their planning, command and coordination, communications, equipment and logistics, and staffing issues. The representative from Dillard University was unable to attend but submitted information in advance.

A selection of their challenges and lessons learned are compiled in the following chapters of the report. Additionally, the report concludes with lessons learned from incidents involving explosives at Georgia Tech and the University of Oklahoma in 2005.

## SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

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The participant schools had a wide range of experiences during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The following summary highlights the central lessons they cited as most important and most generally applicable across a range of hazards.

### PLANNING

It is imperative to have up-to-date emergency operation plans that address all hazards and are exercised on a regular basis. During the hurricanes, many schools found themselves without adequate plans and were forced to adopt hastily-planned responses. Several particularly important planning points were noted.

- Consider extending provisions for self-sufficiency in Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) to 7-10 days. Many campuses have emergency plans that call for 3 days of self-sufficiency. During the hurricanes, this proved to be an unrealistic expectation.
- Obtain the help of engineers when selecting shelter sites on campus; many seemingly “obvious” sites (such as sporting arenas) are not best for withstanding weather.
- Consider determining the Global Positioning System (GPS) locations of campus building, which may be helpful in the event local signs are destroyed. The State of Florida, for example, requires that trucks bringing in relief supplies be equipped with GPS, so that the trucks can be located in real time and drivers can receive directions in places without signs.
- Coordinate the campus EOP with those of surrounding agencies and entities and clarify in advance the criteria and protocols for use of campus facilities as shelter points. Several participants were surprised to discover that facilities on their campuses were considered sheltering points by other members of their community and thus found themselves taking on unexpected evacuees.
- Resolve issues regarding legal authority over campus resources and operations before a critical incident occurs. This process should involve the college or university administration and legal counsel.
- Make agreements with other entities in your area. Campuses with pre-existing arrangements for buses, food, fuel, water, and IT functions had a generally faster response time and smoother recovery operations.
- Planners should also form relationships with federal entities in the area, including the
  - FBI SAC,
  - Homeland Security Advisor, and
  - Emergency Management Assistance Coordinator (EMAC).
- Representatives from colleges and universities should participate on their Local Emergency Planning Committees.

## **TRAINING**

Having an all-hazards plan is necessary, but not sufficient preparation for a major incident; responders must be trained adequately to carry out the plan, and this training should include periodic exercises.

- Some level of Incident Command System (ICS) training is vitally important not only for Public Safety personnel, but also for campus administrators or other individuals (such as physical plant personnel) who may be part of the command or decision-making structure during response efforts. IACLEA offers an Incident Command program for command and supervisory level emergency responders from both campus and non-campus emergency response entities.
- Training is not just for senior officers; beat officers should have some level of Command Post and Incident Command/Emergency Management training. Such courses are available from FEMA and other agencies at no cost to participants.
- Campus officers encountered many situations for which they were not adequately trained; in the worst cases, officers were unable to communicate with the decision-makers in their command structure. Additional training in shelter management, critical incident management, and crowd control would have been useful.

## **COMMAND AND COORDINATION**

- College and university administrators must be prepared to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the coordination of response and recovery efforts. Campus executives with the authority to make decisions sometimes involving the modification of existing policies must be accessible throughout an emergency.



***Entrance at Delgado Community College***



*CAMPUS PUBLIC SAFETY PREPAREDNESS FOR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS*  
*SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED*

- In any large-scale event that involves multiple government officials at the municipal, county, state and federal level, command structures can be confusing. It is essential to have written agreements in place that clarify command structure and coordination before an event occurs. IACLEA has sample memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and mutual aid agreements (MAAs) that can be used to establish these kinds of command structures; these will be available to campus public safety departments on its web site.

## **COMMUNICATION**

During the hurricanes, maintaining situational awareness was one of the greatest problems encountered; communication, both internally to the campus and externally to other agencies and the surrounding area, was an issue for almost every school. The media was not a reliable source of information, and many campuses were acting in an informational vacuum.

- Many participants noted that otherwise-operational radio systems were hampered by a lack of power generators that could be used to re-charge the equipment.
- Satellite phones and UHF/VHF radios (military surplus) were effective in situations where radios and cell phones were unreliable.
- Internet web sites were a critical means of communication with campus communities after the hurricanes.



***Stadium Entrance at McNeese State University***

## **SUPPLIES**

- Many campuses did not have an adequate supply of fuel on hand for post-event needs.
- Campuses with national or regional food services contractors fared better during recovery; they were able to obtain supplies that were not available locally.
- During such a large event, it was difficult for responding agencies to get water and ice distributed to where it was needed. Campuses should consider making agreements with outside entities to provide water and ice.

## **EQUIPMENT**

- In many cases, backup generators (such as those found in dormitories) are designed to be run for short periods, rather than continuously. Such generators are inadequate for extended periods without power.
- Generators should be located well above ground level. Many perfectly functional generators had to be shut off when water reached the level of the lowest power outlets.
- Transfer switches for backup generators should also be above likely flood conditions.
- Key generators should also be armored against wind-borne projectiles.
- During weather incidents, patrol vehicles should be staged out of flood-prone areas, and should be dispersed in separate locations so that catastrophic damage in one location does not affect all vehicles.

## **PEOPLE**

- Key personnel should be identified in advance, and provisions to take care of those people and their families should be made. At the very least, make sure that officers and other key campus personnel have their own emergency plans for family members before an incident occurs. It is also wise to have a timeline for enacting those plans (which may be earlier than the rest of the campus population).
- Backup records of employee contact information (telephone and e-mail) should be kept current, should be kept in a safe location that will remain accessible during an emergency, and should not rely on a single mode of contact (such as the campus e-mail system), which may not be functioning during an emergency.
- When housing/hosting emergency responders as part of the recovery effort, it is important to make certain they are self-sufficient for their supply needs. It is also important to have a timeline for their departure from campus in order to resume academic operations.
- Many campuses found that they did not have adequate plans to deal with the counseling needs that personnel and their families and evacuees required.

## **CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS**

Several conference participants noted that their campus administrators pushed to re-open before public safety personnel were confident that they could sustain operations at a pre-event level. At the same time, it should be recognized that for a college or university to lose an entire semester may mean the campus is out of business completely.

*CAMPUS PUBLIC SAFETY PREPAREDNESS FOR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS*  
*SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED*

- Careful consideration should be given to preserving IT functions. Moving servers away from campus can help preserve payroll operations, databases and other vital information records, and web pages that can serve as a vital link to students and staff evacuated hundreds of miles from campus. If these systems are not functioning, the business of the school will come to a halt.
- Resuming campus operations was problematic in situations where campus administrators or other key personnel were scattered around the country as a result of evacuation. Plans must account for tracking the whereabouts of decision-makers and having a means to reach them to direct or manage incident or post-incident operations.
- When conducting damage assessments, team officers with facilities personnel to ensure that structures are safe to enter and/or downed power lines will not endanger the officers.
- Several campuses housed student evacuees from other institutions; in cases where the evacuees were not well integrated into the existing student community, there were much higher rates of crime and domestic violence.
- During recovery efforts, getting supplies from FEMA and other agencies was hampered by poor communication. Contact personnel were constantly changing, making it difficult to track the progress of requests. Many campuses found that their own pre-existing agreements with outside companies and other colleges and universities were a faster route to getting the supplies and equipment that were needed.
- Financial reimbursement has proven to be a problem for many of the participant schools. Reimbursement from federal sources has been slow in coming, and in many cases may not be provided because the schools are unable to document certain expenditures. It is important to have a plan in place to track and document financial expenditures during an emergency.



***Flooded Campus at Tulane University***

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