

Johnson leave that Saturday before the storm. If only Mayor Nagin had evacuated the poor and the sick. If only the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had constructed better levees. Such nagging thoughts weren't going to bring her back. You couldn't rebuild your new life on the back of the deluge. The new life began in forgiveness. Including forgiving yourself. "It's over," Reverend Walker said. "Hallelujah! Rejoice! It's over. No more Katrina issues on this side of life."

## Timeline

*All times are Central Standard Time.*

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2005

- 5:00 A.M.** Hurricane Katrina is in the Gulf of Mexico, about 165 miles west of Key West, Florida, and 435 miles southeast of the Mississippi River Delta (24.4 N by 84.4 W). It is gathering strength at a forward speed of just 7 mph. Winds are blowing steadily at 115 mph. Hurricane force winds can be felt 40 miles from the eye. Katrina is a Category 3 storm.
- 9:00 A.M.** Plaquemines and St. Charles parishes in Louisiana declare mandatory evacuation.
- 10:00 A.M.** FEMA director Michael Brown appears on CNN to encourage residents of southeastern Louisiana to leave as soon as possible for safety inland. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) issues a hurricane watch for metropolitan New Orleans and warns that Katrina could make landfall as a Category 5 storm.
- 12:00 noon** The Louisiana National Guard calls 4,000 troops into service, representing practically all available troops. Three thousand more of the state's Guard soldiers are in Iraq, along with high-water vehicles and other heavy equipment.
- 1:00 P.M.** Airlines begin to close down operations at Louis Armstrong International Airport. Alabama governor Bob Riley orders evacuation of the southernmost areas of Mobile and Baldwin counties.
- 1:30 P.M.** Governor Kathleen Blanco and local officials go on television advising people to evacuate.
- 4:00 P.M.** Contra-flow plan goes into effect in southeast Louisiana, allowing traffic to move outward on nearly all lanes of the major highways in the vicinity. The NHC's hurricane watch is extended as far east as the Alabama-Florida border.
- 5:00 P.M.** Governor Blanco and Mayor C. Ray Nagin appear at a press conference to warn residents of the storm. Nagin declares a state of emergency in New Orleans, but

stops short of calling for a mandatory evacuation. Tulane University suspends orientation activities for the fall term, telling students and others to leave the region.

**7:25–8:00 P.M.** Max Mayfield, director of the NHC, takes the initiative, calling officials in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi to warn them of the severity of the coming storm.

**10:00 P.M.** The NHC raises the hurricane watch to a warning, predicting that the entire central Gulf Coast will be in danger.

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 28

As of Sunday morning, the Coast Guard is at work closing ports and waterways in the hurricane's predicted path. Personnel, vessels, and aircraft are positioned in staging areas to be ready for the aftermath of the storm.

**12:40 A.M.** Katrina is rated a Category 4 hurricane.

**1:00 A.M.** The eye of the hurricane is located in the Gulf, 310 miles south-southeast of the Mississippi River Delta (25.1 N by 86.8 W), gathering power as it crawls along at 8 mph.

**6:00 A.M.** Hancock County, Mississippi's westernmost coastal county, orders a mandatory evacuation for all residents.

**6:15 A.M.** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that Katrina is now a Category 5 storm.

**7:00 A.M.** Gulf Coast residents wake up to the news that Katrina is a Category 5 hurricane, with winds blowing steadily at 160 mph. The eye is located in the Gulf, 250 miles south-southeast of the Mississippi River Delta (25.7 N by 87.7 W), moving at 12 mph.

**8:00 A.M.** The Superdome opens as a shelter of last resort. Jackson County, the easternmost coastal county in Mississippi, invokes mandatory evacuation orders for all residents south of U.S. Route 90 and in other low-lying areas.

**9:25 A.M.** President George W. Bush calls Governor Blanco, advising that she and Mayor Nagin order a mandatory evacuation. Plans are in place to do so imminently.

**9:30 A.M.** Mayor Nagin orders a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans. The storm is due to come ashore in approximately fifteen hours.

**10:00 A.M.** President Bush speaks with FEMA Director Michael Brown and Governors Kathleen Blanco (Louisiana), Haley Barbour (Mississippi), Jeb Bush (Florida), and Bob Riley (Alabama). Officials in Harrison County, Mississippi's central coastal county, order mandatory evacuations for those in threatened zones.

**10:11 A.M.** The National Weather Service issues a dire warning of the probable impact of Katrina: "Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks... perhaps longer."

**11:00 A.M.** Michael Brown arrives in Baton Rouge.

**3:00 P.M.** Cars are leaving Greater New Orleans at the rate of 18,000 per hour. Even so, about 112,000 people in New Orleans do not own a car or have access to one.

**4:00 P.M.** Highways remain clogged in the areas north and west of New Orleans. About 80 percent of the city's population of 485,000 has evacuated, leaving about 100,000 people.

**4:15 P.M.** President Bush, Michael Brown, and Michael Chertoff participate in an electronic briefing conducted by Max Mayfield, who warned of the danger of destruction and flooding in the wake of Katrina. Michael Brown also tried to prepare federal leaders for the magnitude of the coming disaster: "We're going to need everything that we can possibly muster, not only in this state and in the region, but the nation, to respond to this event." Both Bush and Chertoff will repeatedly claim during the week that they were taken by surprise by the damage wrought by the hurricane.

**4:40 P.M.** The videoconference ends and top federal officials return to their own pursuits. Congressman Thomas Davis III (R-Virginia) later notes: "The president is still at his ranch, the vice president is still fly-fishing in Wyoming, the president's chief of staff is in Maine. In retrospect, don't you think it would have been better to pull together? They should have had better leadership. It is disengagement."

**5:00 P.M.** The first sign of the hurricane: rains from the outermost fringe begin to fall along the coast from southern Louisiana to Biloxi and Gulfport on the central Mississippi Coast.

**6:00 P.M.** A curfew goes into effect in New Orleans. Approximately 10,000 people are in the Superdome; an unknown number are waiting in houses and other buildings all over the region. Seventeen of Mississippi's twenty-seven casinos are closed. Many had shut their doors even earlier, at 2 A.M., to allow employees to evacuate.

**8:30 P.M.** The last train to leave New Orleans before the hurricane departs with many empty cars.

**9:00 P.M.** Rains from Katrina's outer bands come down in New Orleans.

**10:30 P.M.** The last of the people seeking refuge in the Superdome are searched and allowed in. Between 8,000 and 9,000 citizens are in the stands, about 600 are in a temporary medical facility. About 300 officials, medical workers, and staff members oversee the crowd, with security provided by 550 National Guard troops.

### MONDAY, AUGUST 29

**12:00 midnight** The storm surge begins to press up onto Mississippi's western coastline, with beachside residents in Waveland reporting a foot of water in their homes.

**2:00 A.M.** The eye of the hurricane is passing 130 miles south-southeast of New Orleans (28.2 N by 89.6 W). Winds are blowing steadily at almost 155 mph. Katrina is a Category 4 storm, moving slowly at a rate of 12 mph. A slow-moving hurricane is much more destructive than one that passes quickly over inhabited areas.

**3:00 A.M.** The 17th Street Canal begins to suffer a breach, according to National Guard reports.

**4:00 A.M.** The eye of the hurricane is 90 miles south-southeast of New Orleans and 120 miles south-southwest of Biloxi (28.8 N by 89.6 W). Winds are blowing steadily at

almost 150 mph. Katrina is a Category 4 storm. The storm surge begins to arrive at the central part of the Mississippi Coast.

**5:00 A.M.** A civilian calls the Army Corps of Engineers to report that the 17th Street Canal is breached.

**5:15 A.M.** Greater New Orleans loses electric power. At the Superdome, auxiliary generators provide dim light but no air-conditioning.

**5:20 A.M.** The Biloxi/Gulfport Regional Airport records gusts of 78 mph, which indicate that hurricane-force winds have arrived, according to the National Weather Service.

**6:00 A.M.** The eye of the hurricane is 70 miles south-southeast of New Orleans, between the mouth of the Mississippi River and Grand Isle. Rain is falling at the rate 1 inch per hour. All of southeastern Mississippi is pounded by the wind and rain. The storm is 95 miles south-southwest of Biloxi (29.1 N by 89.6 W). Winds are blowing steadily at almost 145 mph. Katrina is a Category 4 storm, with a forward speed of 15 mph. The National Weather Service station at the Biloxi Gulfport Airport is no longer functioning.

**6:10 A.M.** The eye of Katrina makes its landfall near Buras, Louisiana, as a Category 4 hurricane. Pressure in the center of the storm is 920 mb, the third lowest for a hurricane at landfall.

**6:30 A.M.** Buras has been destroyed. Nearly every building in lower Plaquemines Parish, which escorts the Mississippi River into the Gulf, is obliterated.

**7:00 A.M.** High tide along the Mississippi Coast—but the water is still rising, as a result of the storm surge. U.S. Route 90—2 miles from the beachfront—is dotted with boats thrown ashore by the growing waves.

**7:10 A.M.** The storm has reached Pascagoula, the biggest city along the eastern part of the Mississippi Coast; winds of 118 mph are recorded.

**7:11 A.M.** Telephone service fails in southeastern Louisiana, as landlines and most cell phone towers are affected by the storm.

**7:50 A.M.** A massive storm surge sends water over the Mississippi River–Gulf Outlet (MRGO) and the Industrial Canal, causing immediate flooding in St. Bernard Parish and eastern neighborhoods of New Orleans. Water levels in most areas are 10 to 15 feet. In some places, the water is so deep that police officers in boats have to steer carefully around streetlights. Ninety-five percent of the parish is underwater.

**8:00 A.M.** The eye of the hurricane is passing 40 miles to the southeast of New Orleans (29.7 N by 89.6 W), with a forward speed of only 15 mph. Winds are blowing steadily at almost 135 mph; the hurricane has grown in width with hurricane-force winds at least 100 miles from the eye. Katrina is a Category 4 storm, affecting all of southeast Louisiana. Winds and rain are also beginning to tear into the Mississippi Coast.

Mayor Nagin appears on NBC's *Today* show and, in the midst of an otherwise upbeat report, asserts that water is coming through the levees in places: "We will have significant flooding, it is just a matter of how much."

The Waveland Police Department building is pounded by water.

**8:14 A.M.** The Industrial Canal is breached, flooding the Lower Ninth Ward.

**8:15 A.M.** Water rises so quickly at St. Rita's Nursing Facility in St. Bernard Parish that it overtakes bedridden patients. Thirty-five will die during the next half hour.

The water inside the Waveland police headquarters has risen 3 feet in fifteen minutes. The twenty-seven people make their way and end up swimming for something solid to which they can cling.

**8:30 A.M.** Hurricane Katrina pushes a 25-foot storm surge into the flat, unprotected Mississippi Coast.

**9:00 A.M.** Two holes open up in the Superdome roof. The 8-mile-long bridge connecting New Orleans to Slidell along Interstate 10 is impassable, a crumpled wreck.

**9:30 A.M.** In the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, the water is 6 to 8 feet deep.

**9:45 A.M.** The storm surge along the central part of the Mississippi Coast is now 28 feet deep.

**10:00 A.M.** Hurricane Katrina makes a second landfall near Pearlington, Mississippi, at the border with Louisiana. The National Hurricane Center discontinues all hurricane watches. The eye of Katrina is moving ashore at the Louisiana-Mississippi border (30.2 N by 89.6 W). Winds are blowing steadily at almost 125 mph. Hurricane-force winds are felt 125 miles from the eye. Katrina is a Category 3 storm, moving at about 17 mph.

**10:30 A.M.** President Bush declares emergency disasters in three states: Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

**10:40 A.M.** The Waveland police are still clinging to the upper branches of bushes and trees, trying to survive in 10 feet of water. They will be rescued shortly.

**10:45 A.M.** (approximate) President Bush calls Secretary Chertoff from Air Force One, but does not discuss the Gulf Coast, then in the throes of the hurricane. He has questions about immigration policy.

**11:00 A.M.** Brown issues a memo ordering 1,000 FEMA employees to the Gulf Coast. He gives them two days to arrive. Word reaches the Emergency Operations Center in New Orleans of the breach in the 17th Street Canal levee. At the Hancock County Emergency Operations Center, located inland in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, the water is 3 feet deep. The building is 27 feet above sea level. Few other buildings in the vicinity are on such high ground.

**12:00 noon** The eye of the hurricane is located 40 miles south-southwest of Hattiesburg, Mississippi (30.8 N by 89.6 W), increasing its pace to 17 mph. Winds are blowing steadily at 105 mph. Katrina is a Category 2 storm.

The storm surge rises from the open sea, across Lake Pontchartrain, and finally over the communities on the north shore. In towns such as Lacombe and Slidell, the water is 15 to 20 feet deep.

President Bush makes a speech in Arizona concerning Medicare reform. Michael Brown participates in a videoconference that includes Governor Blanco and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Joe Hagin. Brown states that he has spoken with President Bush twice during the morning. In response to a question from Hagin, Blanco says that she has not heard that any levees have breached, but that that could change at any time.



**12:15 P.M.** The hurricane begins to take leave of the Mississippi coast. Barometric pressure rises so quickly that people report that their ears popped. The wind changes direction as the storm passes to the north. The same force that had been pushing water from the sea onto the land, causing the storm surge, begins to send it back in the other direction. The storm surge slowly drains from the coast.

**1:00 P.M.** Mayor Nagin announces the breach of the 17th Street Canal but does not elaborate on the implication.

**1:00 P.M.** (approximate) The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is the first official rescue group to begin operations in New Orleans, arriving in an initial convoy of seventy vehicles, with boats attached. Looting begins in various parts of New Orleans: Mid-City (sporting goods warehouse), Tremé (grocery store), and Uptown (hardware store).

**2:00 P.M.** The eye of the hurricane is 20 miles west-southwest of Hattiesburg, Mississippi (31.4 N by 89.6 W). Winds are blowing steadily at almost 95 mph. Katrina is a Category 1 storm. U.S. Route 90 in Mississippi is covered by 7 feet of water in Harrison County, as the storm surge has yet to recede completely. People have been floating in the water or clinging to treetops since midmorning.

**3:00 P.M.** Four feet of water is reported in the Lakeview section of New Orleans. With the storm proceeding to the north, the water trapped with the storm surge in Lake Pontchartrain shifts south, pressing against the levees and floodwalls protecting the city of New Orleans. The extra pressure widens the breached levees.

**4:00 P.M.** The eye of the hurricane is located 30 miles northwest of Laurel, Mississippi (31.9 N by 89.6 W), moving at 18 mph. Winds are blowing steadily at 75 mph. Katrina is a Category 1 storm. The London Avenue Canal levees are breached in two places. Water is gushing into New Orleans.

**5:00 P.M.** About 1,000 people rescued from flooded neighborhoods have been dropped off at the Ernest Morial Convention Center in New Orleans and told that buses would arrive to pick them up. The buses never arrive. Officials and workers inside the center, numbering about forty, tell the evacuees that there is no provision for sheltering people: no food, water, or other necessities. The doors are locked.

**6:45 P.M.** The Coast Guard is conducting rescues with its initial fleet of seven helicopters.

**8:00 P.M.** Governor Blanco speaks with President Bush to impress upon him the destruction caused by Katrina: "Mr. President, we need your help. We need everything you've got." Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld is attending a San Diego Padres baseball game, at the invitation of the team owner.

**9:27 P.M.** Michael Chertoff's chief of staff, John F. Wood, receives firsthand description of the levee breaks and the "extensive flooding" in New Orleans, courtesy of FEMA official Marty Bahamonde.

**9:30 P.M.** (approximate) President Bush turns in for the night, without taking any action on the Katrina disaster or Governor Blanco's requests for assistance.

**10:30 P.M.** Homeland Security in Washington receives a message regarding Bahamonde's firsthand description of the disastrous flooding in New Orleans.

**11:00 P.M.** White House receives firsthand report of the levee breaks and the dangerous, extensive flooding in New Orleans.

**11:05 P.M.** Deputy Homeland Secretary Michael Jackson receives e-mail report on Bahamonde's account of New Orleans disaster.

**12:00 midnight** (approximate) People outside the Convention Center break a door and force their way in, unlocking the other doors.

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 30

As of Tuesday morning, people with nowhere else to go flock to the Convention Center; by the end of the day, there will be 20,000 inside.

Patients and staff members are stranded in New Orleans hospitals, all but one of which are without power, and conditions are deteriorating. Six hundred are stuck in Charity Hospital (250 patients and 350 others), 1,200 in Tulane University Medical Center (160 patients, 1,040 others—and 76 pets), 2,000 in Truro Infirmary (250 patients and 1,750 others), 650 in Methodist Hospital (150 patients and 500 others), and 2,060 in Memorial Medical Center (260 patients and 1,800 others).

Eight oil refineries in Louisiana have ceased operation. They account for 8 percent of America's refining capacity. Most offshore drilling operations are also shut down; 89 percent of production has been suspended.

**1:30 A.M.** The boiler room at Tulane University Hospital, which houses the emergency generators, fills with water. Within three hours, all power is out.

**3:00 A.M.** When the power fails at Methodist Hospital, volunteers, including some children, replace ventilator machines by hand-pumping air into the lungs of ailing patients, hour after hour.

**6:00 A.M.** The area around the Superdome and New Orleans City Hall, which had been dry on Monday, is under 3 feet of steadily rising water.

**7:00 A.M.** President Bush, in San Diego, is told of the severity of the crisis along the Gulf Coast. He is advised to end his six-week vacation early and he agrees. After finishing his appearances in California, he will return to his ranch in Texas and then return to Washington on Wednesday. In later statements, he maintains that as of Tuesday morning, he was informed that New Orleans had "dodged the bullet."

**8:00 A.M.** The number of National Guard troops on the ground in the disaster zones of their respective states is nearly 3,800 in Louisiana, more than 1,900 in Mississippi, and 800 in Alabama. In addition, Alabama has sent specialists to assist Mississippi.

**9:00 A.M.** (approximate) Michael Chertoff leaves Washington for Atlanta, where he will attend a conference on avian flu. He later claims that he believed New Orleans to be safe, having read some early, positive reports in the morning newspapers. He does not explain why he ignored the dire descriptions delivered to his staff the night before.

**10:00 A.M.** Mayor Nagin announces that efforts to use sandbags to block the breach in the 17th Street Canal levee have not been successful. The breach has grown to about 200 feet. Looting is reported all over New Orleans.

**10:53 A.M.** Mayor Nagin decrees a mandatory evacuation for the city and empowers officers to take residents away, even against their will.

**11:00 A.M.** President Bush makes remarks on the anniversary of V-J Day at the naval air station North Island in San Diego, California.

**11:30 A.M.** In Louisiana and Mississippi, 1.1 million homes and other buildings are without power, according to Entergy.

**12:00 noon** Fires are seen around New Orleans. The fire department struggles to reach them, let alone fight them. In Harrison County, Mississippi, 240 of the state's National Guard troops have arrived for recovery work.

**1:00 P.M. (approximate)** The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is operating more than 200 flat-bottomed boats in Greater New Orleans. "We'd load a boat with people, run to the nearest high ground or road, unload them, and go back out," said a warden.

**1:30 P.M.** Louis Armstrong International Airport is functioning again. Unscheduled flights for relief efforts use the facility.

**2:00 P.M.** A casino official in Mississippi petitions the state legislature to enact changes in the regulations specifying that gambling is legal only on floating vessels; he wants inland casinos to be legalized.

**3:00 P.M.** Governor Blanco, Senator Landrieu, Senator Vitter, and other officials report on conditions in southeast Louisiana. Water is still pouring into the city and streets are blocked with up to 10 feet of water.

**4:07 P.M.** House Speaker Dennis Hastert suggests that Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) call on President Bush to visit the Mississippi Coast, saying that "the people of Mississippi are flat on their backs. They're going to need your help."

**7:00 P.M.** Secretary Chertoff designates the Katrina destruction an "Incident of National Significance."

### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31

As of Wednesday morning, 78,000 people in Mississippi are living in shelters.

Waters have stopped rising in New Orleans, as levels in the city and the lake reached parity.

The population inside the Superdome has grown to 26,000 and officials have locked the doors.

The temperature inside Methodist Hospital, which has been without power for more than twenty-four hours, is 106 degrees.

The Coast Guard is continuing rescue operations with 4,000 personnel, 37 aircraft, 15 cutters, and 63 small boats.

**8:00 A.M.** Two hospitals, Charity and University, lose their generators, from either flooding or lack of fuel. There is no light, air-conditioning, or power to run medical equipment. President Bush participates in a videoconference on the subject of Ka-

trina; FEMA Director Mike Brown reports on flooding in Greater New Orleans and the breached levees.

**9:00 A.M. (approximate)** Governor Blanco tries repeatedly to get a call through to the President; when he finally takes her call, she requests 40,000 troops.

**10:00 A.M.** Governor Blanco makes a joint announcement with FEMA that plans have been laid to evacuate residents remaining in Greater New Orleans to the Astrodome in Houston. Air Force One flies low over the Gulf Coast, so that President Bush can see the damage. Joint Task Force Katrina, the Pentagon's command center for disaster response, is organized at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The person in charge is Lieutenant General Russel Honore.

**11:00 A.M.** With the Superdome closed to new refugees, people with nowhere to go are now heading toward the Convention Center.

**11:30 A.M.** Air Force One is seen in the skies over the Gulf Coast. President Bush sees the devastation of the Gulf Coast from the air, ordering the pilot of his official jetliner to fly low over the region.

**12:00 noon** The water stops rising in New Orleans—the levels in the city and the lake have reached parity.

**12:00 noon (approximate)** Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt declares that a public health emergency exists in the states affected by Katrina.

**12:15 P.M.** Senator David Vitter (R-Louisiana) conveys a message to Governor Blanco from Bush political advisor Karl Rove, advising her that the White House wanted to federalize the evacuation of New Orleans.

**2:00 P.M. (approximate)** Evacuation of the Superdome begins with first priority given to the 700 seriously ill and disabled people housed in the stadium. Officials finish moving them out in late evening.

**2:20 P.M.** Governor Blanco telephones President Bush, informing him that federalization of the evacuation and the Louisiana National Guard will not be necessary. She asks him to announce when federal troops will arrive in the disaster zone.

**3:00 P.M.** President Bush convenes a task force at the White House to discuss ways to improve the response. It meets for an hour.

**4:00 P.M.** About 200 refugees from the flooded city of New Orleans are met on the Crescent City Bridge to the town of Gretna by police officers brandishing guns and shouting obscenities. The police chief, Arthur Lawson, had given orders to refuse entry to those needing help or a dry place to camp. "My obligation is to the people of Jefferson Parish," he said.

**4:11 P.M.** President Bush addresses the nation in his first speech devoted to Hurricane Katrina.

**7:00 P.M.** Martial law is declared in New Orleans. Mayor Nagin pulls the police force off rescue detail and orders officers to focus entirely on controlling the looting, which has become rampant.

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

As of Thursday morning, an estimated 4,000 people are stranded on the Interstate 10 overpass in New Orleans, many are elderly and sick and have been without their prescription drugs for days.

The Convention Center houses 15,000 to 25,000 people—estimates are difficult to make—who are without supplies.

Around the United States, the price of regular gasoline shoots past \$3 per gallon, purportedly as a result of the disruption in refining in Louisiana.

Baton Rouge has replaced New Orleans as the biggest city in Louisiana.

**2:00 A.M.** The first of thousands of evacuees arrive in Houston and are welcomed into the Astrodome.

**6:12 A.M.** In an interview on *Good Morning America*, Bush inexplicably says, “I don’t think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees.”

**7:00 A.M.** In an interview on National Public Radio, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff calls the reports of thousands of people stranded in and around the Convention Center in New Orleans “rumors,” and states, “Actually, I have not heard a report of thousands of people in the Convention Center who don’t have food and water.”

**8:00 A.M.** According to a report in the morning’s Arlington Heights, Illinois *Daily Herald*, House Speaker Dennis Hastert says “it doesn’t make sense” to rebuild New Orleans in the same low-lying area. “First of all your heart goes out to the people, the loss of their homes,” he told the editorial board, “but there are some real tough questions to ask about how you go about rebuilding this city.”

**10:00 A.M.** (approximate) A detail of eighty-eight policemen attempt to take control of the Convention Center but are turned away.

**11:00 A.M.** (approximate) Dr. Norman McSwain, chief of trauma surgery at Charity Hospital, calls the Associated Press to report that the institution has no food, barely any fresh water, and very limited power. It is being ignored by rescuers and was not on any rescue plan.

**1:44 P.M.** President Bush appears in the Oval Office to introduce two presidential predecessors, his father, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton, as co-chairmen of the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund. One of Bush’s associates describes him on this afternoon as “angry, tired, grumpy.”

**2:00 P.M.** Mayor Nagin delivers an ultimatum to the rest of the country, on CNN. Calling his statement “a desperate SOS,” he insists that “I need reinforcements. I need troops, man. I need five hundred buses, man. This is a national disaster. I’ve talked directly with the President. I’ve talked to the head of the Homeland Security. I’ve talked to everybody under the sun.” The Army Corps of Engineers reports that water levels in Lake Pontchartrain are falling, meaning that the city is also draining somewhat. The Corps also says that progress is finally being made in the effort to plug the 17th Street Canal levee.

**3:00 P.M.** (approximate) Evacuations of two local hospitals are suspended due to attacks from sniper fire.

**8:00 P.M.** Mayor Nagin calls in to the radio program of Garland Robinette and complains vociferously about the federal response. In comments crackling with slang and obscenities, the mayor blasts federal authorities, including the President. The interview ends with both Robinette and Nagin unable to talk, for all the raw emotion they feel, along with everyone else in Greater New Orleans.

**9:00 P.M.** Governor Blanco says that Speaker Hastert’s comments on the rebuilding of New Orleans amounted to an effort to “kick us when we’re down. I demand an immediate apology.”

**10:00 P.M.** In Washington, the Senate convenes a special session to vote on a \$10.5 billion emergency relief bill for the disaster zone. It is called H.R. 3645, the “Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to Meet Immediate Needs Arising from the Consequences of Hurricane Katrina, 2005.” The bill passes.

**11:00 P.M.** Officials in Houston deem that the Astrodome is filled to a workable capacity after 11,375 people have been admitted. They close the doors and begin sending new arrivals from Louisiana to other shelters in Texas.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

As of Friday morning, Louis Armstrong International Airport has been set up as a medical center and is ready to receive patients from area hospitals and others needing help.

The number of National Guard troops in the disaster zone has risen to 19,500; 6,500 are in New Orleans.

The Louisiana SPCA is working to save the thousands of pets left behind in Greater New Orleans.

**2:00 A.M.** The last staff members are evacuated from Memorial Medical Center in New Orleans. Forty-five bodies remain behind.

**4:35 A.M.** Those still in New Orleans are jarred by several loud explosions at a chemical warehouse.

**4:55 A.M.** Alan Gould, a man who has been living inside the Convention Center for three days, tells CNN that with no food, water, or help from the outside, people are suffering and many are dying. He calls the situation “genocide.” Told that thousands of troops are expected over the next few days, Gould tells CNN, “Okay, so we got to sit by and watch four or five more elderly sick people die or some—another baby die, or whatever, while they’re making up their mind to come in?”

**6:20 A.M.** The head of Emergency Operations for New Orleans, former Marine officer Terry Ebbert, expresses the bottled-up frustration of people all over the country: “This is a national disgrace. FEMA has been here three days, yet there is no command and control. We can send massive amounts of aid to tsunami victims, but we can’t bail out the city of New Orleans.”

**9:00 A.M.** (approximate) A well-coordinated force of 1,000 National Guard troops storms the Convention Center to take control. It is an enormous building and a time-consuming task. The troops have 200,000 meals with them.



**10:30 A.M.** Army Chinook helicopters evacuate the last people from Tulane University Hospital.

**10:35 A.M.** In Mobile at the start of a tour of the Gulf Coast, President Bush praises Brown: "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job." He seems utterly out of touch with FEMA's ineffectual response to the disaster.

**12:00 noon** Convoys of army trucks arrive in New Orleans, with supplies, food, and water. Lieutenant General Russel Honore is in command. In Washington, the House of Representatives passes the \$10.5 billion relief bill approved by the Senate the night before.

**12:30 P.M.** In Biloxi, Bush says, "I am satisfied with the response. I am not satisfied with all the results."

**1:00 P.M.** Evacuation of the Superdome continues at a slow pace; those at the Convention Center continue to wait for buses.

**2:07 P.M.** The United Nations announces plans to send aid to the Gulf Coast. Individual nations from Venezuela to Canada to Germany have already started sending personnel and matériel to the disaster zone.

**2:30 P.M.** President Bush visits the 17th Street Canal levee in New Orleans and has his picture taken in front of the effort to patch the breach. Huge machinery is being used to lower building materials into the gap.

**3:00 P.M.** (approximate) With the Astrodome deemed full, having accepted more than 11,000 evacuees, the city of Houston opens the Reliant Center, which will accept another 11,000 people from the hurricane zone.

**4:00 P.M.** President Bush meets with Governor Blanco, Mayor Nagin, and others aboard Air Force One. Nagin almost loses control as he demands that Bush and Blanco work out a chain of command for the deployment of military personnel.

The hospitals in New Orleans are finally evacuated.

**5:01 P.M.** President Bush makes a five-minute speech at Louis Armstrong International Airport promising that New Orleans will be rebuilt. Some people consider his flippancy on the occasion inappropriate. Referring to New Orleans, he said, "I believe the town where I used to come from Houston, Texas, to enjoy myself—occasionally too much—will be that very same town, that it will be a better place to come to."

**8:30 P.M.** (approximate) Amtrak trains are being used to take evacuees out of New Orleans.

**9:40 P.M.** On the telethon "A Concert for America," produced by NBC, singer Kanye West goes off-script to complain about the specter of racism in the federal response to the Katrina victims, saying, "You know, it's been five days [without aid], because most of the people are black. . . . George Bush doesn't care about black people."

**11:20 P.M.** Governor Blanco receives a fax from Bush Chief of Staff Andrew Card, indicating that she need only sign an attached letter requesting that the federal government assume control of the rescue and recovery in Louisiana, including oversight of National Guard troops.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

As of Saturday morning, the state of Texas has taken in 220,000 evacuees from Louisiana, not counting those staying with relatives and friends. The number staying in the state's ninety-seven official shelters is about 120,000, with about 100,000 in hotels.

Katrina has impacted 90,000 square miles—an area equivalent to the size of Great Britain.

**2:15 A.M.** With the evacuation of the Superdome almost complete—2,000 people are left—the National Guard abruptly stops the operation because buses have been ordered to stop going to the stadium. No one at the Superdome knows the reason.

**7:30 A.M.** President Bush prepares to announce that the federal government is taking over control of the Louisiana National Guard and other rescue functions. He has signed the \$10.5 billion emergency spending bill passed by Congress.

**7:56 A.M.** Governor Blanco faxes a letter to Andrew Card at the White House, refusing the federal government's attempt to assume control.

**8:00 A.M.** President Bush changes his announcement to cover only the deployment of 7,000 active-duty troops, which would, he says, arrive in the Gulf Coast over the next three days; the troops are from the 82nd Airborne, the First Cavalry, and the Marines First and Second Expeditionary Forces.

**9:00 A.M.** Governor Blanco makes a statement describing a new attitude in New Orleans, now that 13,000 National Guard troops are on the ground there. She predicts that people in the Convention Center will be moved out that day.

**9:30 A.M.** Michael Brown announces that 1.9 million meals (army rations) and 6.7 million bottles of water are on hand in the disaster zone.

**12:00 noon** Buses arrive at the Convention Center to take people to safety and comfort elsewhere.

**1:45 P.M.** Helicopters take the last evacuees off the Interstate 10 overpass in New Orleans.

**3:00 P.M.** James Lee Witt, the former director of FEMA, has been hired by Governor Blanco to help the state of Louisiana organize its relief efforts. Michael Brown's response to the hiring: "That is absolutely the right thing to do. He will make a huge difference."

**4:00 P.M.** The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* reports that the streets of New Orleans are "getting safer by the minute."

**5:00 P.M.** Loyola University announces that the fall semester has been canceled. Tulane and other colleges in New Orleans have already made the same decision.

**5:47 P.M.** The Superdome is empty.

**9:50 P.M.** Louisiana State Police announces that the Convention Center is empty.

# THE GREAT DELUGE

*Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans,  
and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*

Douglas Brinkley

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