



"RE-BUILDING THE CITY'S WATER SYSTEMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY"

Sewerage & Water Board OF NEW ORLEANS

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SEWERAGE AND WATER BOARD GETS EARLY START ON HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS AGAIN THIS YEAR

In August of 2012 when Hurricane Isaac hit the area, the Sewerage and Water Board (S&WB) experienced no major problems with the drainage system or its field operations. One main reason was that the Board was so well-prepared for the storm because its management and staff began its emergency planning and preparations early, well before the tropical season began.

And that's the case again this year. The S&WB began its planning well before the tropical storm season begins. The Board's team of emergency responders, managers, directors and crucial employees are prepared to go into action as soon as necessary.

Hurricane-type readiness is an everyday experience for the Sewerage & Water Board because of New Orleans' record-breaking rainfalls in the spring and early summer. Many of these rainstorms create more runoff than hurricanes. Many goals are, therefore, built into the hurricane preparedness plan. This includes an immediate reaction to any problems, which may develop, that would interfere with the protection of the city's citizens and the safety of employees. The board's mobile command center has further enhanced communications and the coordination of emergency efforts.

According to the General Superintendent, Joseph Becker, the S&WB leaders have met with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its partners in flood protection, to ensure that coordination of operations and communications between the two are in place and tested. Preparation meetings and tabletop exercises and contingencies that are triggered when a hurricane/tropical storm enters the Gulf were completed in May.

This includes:

- Emergency contracts for pre-staged generators at key facilities;
- Emergency response boats and communication equipment staged at various Drainage Pumping Stations;
- Arrangements for an Emergency Operation Center at the Main Water Plant to coordinate the S&WB's response to emergency events;
- Providing employees with placards for response and re-entry;
- Giving employees a 1-800 call-in number to report their location in the event they have evacuated;
- Building emergency protective Tiger Dams to protect against flooding at the Main Water Plant Power House; and
- Establishment of a Mobile Command Post to be staged in Baton Rouge as an alternate Emergency Operations Center.

One of the first things newly appointed Executive Director, Cedric Grant did after taking the helm in July 2014 was to review the agency's hurricane preparedness plan and compliance. According to Grant, "Management and staff are confident that our teams of experts are well-prepared and able to work internally with our own forces and externally with the City's overall Office of Emergency Preparedness Command Center, Corps of Engineers, levee districts and adjacent parishes. The input from those employees who experienced Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike and Isaac will be invaluable resources in the event a major storm approaches."

At all of the many neighborhood, community, civic and business meetings SWB teams attend, a prime concern of citizens is the Board's readiness for storms. Staff assures them that everyone knows what to do and when to do it and, yet, the Boards' plan is flexible enough to quickly adjust to unforeseen challenges. The citizens of New Orleans can be confident that the Boards' first responders are ready to go into action when needed.

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