

Disaster Down South Hurricane Katrina's Victims Need Help

By Liz Vanun

Two weeks ago, an incredibly powerful storm hit the South. The storm is called Hurricane Katrina. Katrina began as a tropical storm. It first formed over the sea on August 23rd. It got stronger and its winds got faster. Its winds were faster than 150 miles an hour!

Before the storm hit, officials warned people to leave the cities in which they lived. It would be too dangerous for people to stay at home. Hundreds of thousands of people left their homes. Tens of thousands of people did not.

Then, on Monday, August 29th, Katrina struck. It landed on the coast of Louisiana, near New Orleans. Its winds tore down trees, homes, and power lines. Its rains caused a great deal of flooding. The coast of nearby Mississippi was hit, too. Towns were washed away by huge waves from the sea. Thousands of people died in the storm.

The city of New Orleans was hit the hardest. New Orleans has the Mississippi River on one side. It has a big lake on the other side. Years ago, special **levees** were built around the city to prevent the lake from flooding the city. Hurricane Katrina broke the walls. Water from the lake poured into the city. Soon, almost all of New Orleans was flooded.

No Food, Water or Electricity

The water kept rising for three days. People who stayed behind were trapped. When the water filled their homes, they climbed into their attics or onto their roofs. They had no food and no water. There was no electricity in New Orleans.

The army sent helicopters to rescue the people. Later, boats were sent to take people out. "We have rescued thousands of people," the mayor said.

Engineers from the army worked to fix the walls around



Cleaning up a school after the hurricane.
(Getty Images)

New Orleans. They dumped huge bags filled with sand on the damaged levees. Some sandbags weighed 30,000 pounds. On Tuesday, September 6th, the walls were fixed. Then, workers began pumping water out of the city. Slowly, the water level went down. As they worked, soldiers found bodies of people who had died in the storm. The soldiers also worked to bring back electrical power in the city.

More soldiers arrived to help people leave the city. The mayor ordered everyone to **evacuate**. The city was very unhealthy because of all the dirt and **polluted** water. There was nothing left to stay for.

Helping the Victims

Now, hundreds of thousands of people are stuck. They are living together in shelters. They have no food, no clothing, and no money. They have no homes to go back to. Some people do not know where their families are. The government is trying to help them. It is sending food, water, and medicine. Ten thousand sick people were flown to hospitals. More help is still on the way.

President Bush visited the South twice. He looked at the ruined cities and towns. He visited the **victims** in the shelters and spoke to them. He said the government would keep helping them. It will send them more food and money. It will rebuild their cities

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Vocabulary Words

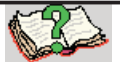
levees> walls that hold back water

engineers> people who understand how to build roads, bridges, dams, or design machines and engines

evacuate> leave

polluted> impure

victims> people who are hurt



Did You Know?

A gentle breeze in the spring measures about 8-12 miles an hour, while a strong fall wind measures about 25-31 miles an hour. Hurricane Katrina's winds measured 150 miles an hour!



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What Are Hurricanes?

Hurricanes are powerful storms that begin to form at sea in the tropical region. Winds from two opposite directions come together with a crash. They form a circle and whip around the center. The center is called the "eye." The winds gain speed and power as long as they stay over warm ocean waters. When they reach colder waters or land, they weaken. Hurricanes that blow over land can cause tremendous damage to buildings, cars, trees, and people.

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and homes.

Some people are angry at the government. They say that the government worked too slowly. It took too much time to get help to the victims. "A lot of people are playing the blame game," said President Bush. He said he will look into why the help took so long to come. However, helping the victims comes first.



A car which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina. (Getty Images)

President Bush asked Americans to send money to help the victims. He also asked them to open their homes for the victims. Many Americans listened to the President. They are sending lots of money.

Others are inviting the victims to live with them. They are treating the victims kindly.

Nearby states have taken in many of the victims. Almost 250,000 victims of the storm are in Texas. The governor of Texas said there is no room for more victims. Other states said they will help. Now, buses are driving for hours to bring victims to other states. Some schools are accepting children from Louisiana. They want the children to keep learning, even when they have no home.

Many victims are waiting to go back home. Officials say they may have to wait nine months before they can return. The victims want to rebuild their homes. Others say they are happy where they are. They will rebuild their lives in other states.

Children Help Children

Jackie Kantor, 14, and little sisters Melissa, 11, and Jenna, 8, live in Maryland. The sisters wanted to help the children who are suffering because of Hurricane Katrina. Jackie came up with the idea of sending backpacks to these children. "It's really going to make them feel like they have something of their own when they have lost everything," Jackie said in an interview with NPR.

The children began collecting backpacks. They sent out messages telling people how to help. The principal of a nearby school agreed to allow the girls to store the backpacks in his school. By Wednesday, September 7th, the girls had gathered 5,000 backpacks! The backpacks were filled with toys, notebooks, and pencils. And most important, the bags were filled with love and kindness.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How do tropical storms begin?
2. How many days did Katrina grow before it struck Louisiana?
3. What did President Bush mean when he said, "A lot of people are playing the blame game"?

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