

This is historical material, "frozen in time." The web site is no longer updated and links to external web sites and some internal pages will not work.



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

CHAPTER SEVEN: EPILOGUE

Each morning as the sun rises over the Gulf Coast, determined residents of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama begin another day in the long trial of reviving their communities and rebuilding their lives. They continue to grieve for those who were lost. For all of them, Katrina and its aftermath remain a painful, challenging, and ever-present reality.

These human dimensions and their indelible images of despair and destruction must remain sharply in focus as we address the lessons we have learned from our Federal response to Hurricane Katrina. The seventeen specific lessons we have identified resulted in 125 recommendations, which have been reviewed by all relevant Federal departments and agencies. They soon will enter a review process, which will help to refine the recommendations, as necessary, as well as develop implementation plans and attendant timelines.

These recommendations for corrective action are substantial, and the task to implement them will be a weighty one. Arriving at sound policy decisions is difficult enough, but the path to effectuating significant, transformational change within bureaucracies can be a lengthy process. But if the lessons of Katrina really are to be learned, this change is imperative.

The 2006 hurricane season is just over three months away. Even while the homeland security policy community undertakes the deliberative process to implement the lessons we have learned from Katrina, there are specific actions we can and should undertake now – in parallel with the policy process – to be better prepared for future emergencies. We propose to undertake the following activities before June 1:

- Ensure that, in the event of another disaster, we are able to co-locate relevant Federal, State, and local decision-makers, including leaders of State National Guards, to enhance unity of effort
- For events preceded by warning, ensure we are prepared to pre-position a fully resourced and integrated interagency Federal Joint Field Office (JFO) to coordinate and, if necessary, direct Federal support to the disaster
- Ensure situational awareness by establishing rapid deployable communications as well as instituting a structure for consolidated Federal operational reporting to the Department of Homeland Security
- In order to enhance coordination of military resources supporting the response, co-locate a single Department of Defense point of contact at the JFO and current FEMA regional offices
- To ensure the most effective employment of Federal disaster relief personnel and assets, designate locations throughout the country for receiving, staging, moving, and integrating them
- Identify and develop rosters of Federal, State, and local government personnel who are prepared to assist in disaster relief
- Employ all available 21st Century technologies both to update and utilize the national Emergency Alert System in order to provide the general public with advanced notification of and instruction for disasters and emergencies
- Encourage States to pre-contract with service providers for key disaster relief efforts, such as debris removal and the provision of critical commodities
- Enhance the mechanism for providing Federal funds to States for preparations upon warning of an imminent emergency
- Improve delivery of assistance to disaster victims by streamlining registration, expediting eligibility decisions, tracking movements of displaced victims, and incorporating safeguards against fraud
- Enhance on-going review of State evacuation plans and incorporate planning for Continuity of Government to ensure continuation of essential and emergency services

We have already begun collaborating with the Department of Homeland Security to implement many of these steps. The completion of the tasks above will better position the Federal government to respond to natural and man-made disasters more effectively and efficiently in the near-term. And as the Federal government works to implement these steps and the full 125 recommendations contained in this Report, we encourage State and local governments, all facets of the private sector as well as the media to undertake a review of their own respective roles and responsibilities in both preparing for and responding to catastrophic events. In the end, what we require for a fully successful national response to all 21st Century hazards is to build upon the national and homeland security foundations we have established since 9/11 and implement a unified system of National Preparedness.

We are confident that the lessons we have learned from Hurricane Katrina and the accompanying recommendations we propose will yield preparedness dividends that transcend Federal, State, and local boundaries. Their full implementation will help the Nation – all levels of government, the private sector, and communities and individual citizens – achieve a shared commitment to preparedness. Together, we will strengthen our ability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from a wide range of catastrophic possibilities that are as varied as the mind of a terrorist and as random as the weather. There is no greater mission, and no greater tribute to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

[« Back to Table of Contents](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

[Appendix E - Endnotes »](#)
