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Hurricane Katrina, August 2005

By Joyce Furstenau

At the top of the list of the costliest natural disasters in the history of the United States is Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina was the third strongest hurricane ever to hit the U. S. It affected 90,000 square miles in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama.



The hurricane formed over the Bahamas and turned into a Category 1 hurricane by the time it hit the southeastern tip of Florida. It got stronger as it traveled across the Gulf of Mexico. It made its second landfall off the coast of southeast Louisiana on Monday, August 29, 2005. It had become a category 4 hurricane by then. The storm surge that followed caused destruction from central Florida to Texas. New Orleans, Louisiana, experienced even more damage because its levees were breached, letting water flood a large portion of the city.

The National Weather Service warned people of the tropical monster that was heading towards the southern coast. Residents were told to expect power outages. They were told they might lose their rooftops and to expect water shortages. The National Hurricane Director was very concerned. He personally called the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi. He even called President Bush at his ranch in Texas. He spoke directly with New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin. Nagin issued an evacuation order for his city. Most people left. About eighty percent of the population evacuated. The estimate was that around 100,000 people remained in the metro area. Some were stranded tourists; others did not own a car and had no way out. Those who were not able to leave were instructed to go to the New Orleans Convention Center and the Superdome.

There were fourteen deaths in Florida as a result of the hurricane. Two people were killed in Alabama. Mississippi was hit hard. Two

hundred thirty-eight deaths were reported in Mississippi. The state received severe property damage. Water reached inland twelve miles from the shoreline in some places. Ninety percent of the seaside communities of Biloxi, Gulfport, and others were flooded in the state of Mississippi.

When the storm hit New Orleans, the winds speeds rose up to 145 mph. The storm surge that followed was even worse. The levee system in New Orleans gave way under the force of the storm surge. Water began to fill the city streets. Low-lying neighborhoods were flooded. People who stayed behind had to find high ground to keep from drowning. Many did not survive this final blow. In the end, nearly eighty percent of the city of New Orleans was flooded. Many deaths were reported; the number varies from 986 to more than 1,500 by different sources.

By Tuesday, the entire nation was shocked by the television footage of the most damaging hurricane in U.S. history. More than 50,000 people were stranded in the Convention Center without water, proper toilet facilities, or food. The situation was becoming even more desperate. They were cooped up like this until Saturday, September 3, when the buses finally began to leave town.

Around 1,800 deaths from the effects of Katrina were counted across seven states. Unclaimed and unidentified bodies lay in makeshift morgues for weeks, even months. The damage was estimated to top \$108 billion. Many survivors believe that it was more than the levee system that failed in this disaster. The government's mismanagement and lack of leadership after the disaster was deemed inexcusable by many of the area's residents - not just in New Orleans - but along the entire path of the killer hurricane.

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Questions

- _____ 1. Where did the hurricane begin forming?
- A. near Hawaii
 - B. near Cuba
 - C. near the Bahamas
 - D. near Mexico



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- _____ 2. By the time the hurricane hit Louisiana, how strong was it?
- A. Category 4
 - B. Category 2
 - C. Category 3
 - D. Category 1

3. What percent of New Orleans population left the city before the storm?

4. People in New Orleans who were stranded were directed to go where?

- _____ 5. How many states lost lives to Hurricane Katrina?
- A. seven
 - B. five
 - C. six
 - D. four

6. How much of New Orleans flooded?
