

Conducting Elections in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



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Louisiana Secretary of State

Challenges Faced in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



- Physical Access
- Health Risks
- Damage Assessment
- Emergency Measures
- Legislative Action
- Lack of Resources



LOUISIANA SECRETARY OF STATE

Mitigation in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

- Opened “war room”
- Called in voting machine manufacturer to get machines certified
- Started process of locating local election officials, staff and voters
- Launched 14-state digital and print media campaign
- Held a three-state voting rights tour to heaviest populated states
- Other secretaries of state assisted with media
- Set up elections hotline on which staff answered more than 27,000 calls



Mitigation in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



- On the ground, secured large hotel as headquarters
- Hotel rooms and ballrooms used to operate daily activities of state and local election officials
- Phone service still intermittent, so used State Police radios as back up



Mitigation in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



- No signage in the city
- More than 2,000 signs put out
- Mega polling locations set up due to so many polling locations being uninhabitable or completely destroyed
- At mega sites, provided greeters to assist voters
- Today, several mega sites are still in use



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Partnerships in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



American Red Cross



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT



FEMA



LOUISIANA SECRETARY OF STATE

Partnerships in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

- State Police and local law enforcement provided for ballot and staff transport to and from polling locations
- National Guard and Attorney General's Investigation Unit assisted in transportation as well
- United States Postal Service worked with us to use the main office's post office box for absentee ballots due to sporadic mail in Orleans Parish
- Office of Emergency Preparedness, State Police and the National Guard helped to deliver necessities while rebuilding election process
- Major hardware/home improvement stores such as Home Depot and Lowe's for resources such as plywood, flashlights, etc.



Partnerships in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

- Gasoline companies to send trucks from neighboring states
- Red Cross for medical assistance and proper immunizations
- FEMA for correct gear when dealing with hazardous materials
- Companies providing tents, industrial size generators and large signs
- Phone companies such as AT&T and Verizon restoring service and troubleshooting
- Department of Transportation and Development for traffic issues on Election Day
- Entergy, the local electric company, was on call for utility issues



Post-Disaster Advice

- Be ready to put your plan to work!
- Two most important pieces of advice: Secure equipment, moving if necessary, and make contact with staff
- If have power and equipment, or paper ballots, can hold an election
- Maintain relationships with those who have helped before or could help in the future
- Think about food, water and restrooms when setting up mega sites
- Encourage states anticipating bad weather to push early voting, and if possible, tell voters to vote early before evacuation
- Work closely with governor, state legislators and local election officials

