



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

MICHAEL S. YENNI
MAYOR

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KENNER'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOSTED 6TH ANNUAL HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS MEETING

Kenner, LA. – On May 19, 2015, **Mayor Michael S. Yenni, Chief Michael Glaser** and **Kenner's Office of Emergency Management** held their annual **Regional Response Partners' Hurricane Season Preparedness meeting** at Kenner Police Headquarters. This is the sixth year the group has met in Kenner. The purpose of the session is to bring together agencies and organizations that provide services to or that work collaboratively with the City of Kenner year round and that may be called upon to respond to Kenner in the event of a major storm. Participants review agency-specific emergency plans, identify capabilities and resources, discuss strategy, identify points of contacts, and address issues of common concern, such as Contraflow, mutual aid, sheltering, re-entry protocols, and relief operations. The meeting facilitates close coordination between region-wide governmental and non-government entities during and following a disaster. This year, the event was attended by over 70 representatives from various military, federal, state, parish, and local entities.

Chief Glaser opened the meeting with a discussion on the importance of regional partnerships in responding to disasters. He described the preparedness, planning, training, and operations undertaken by his agency year round to address crisis response. He also addressed the high degree of coordination and cooperation amongst City agencies as well as the good working relationships Kenner has with its many regional partners, both public and private entities.

Mayor Yenni outlined the City's unified approach to incident management, coordinated municipal services and described the current state of emergency preparedness in Kenner. He discussed the importance of local homeland security initiatives to protect Kenner residents, businesses and infrastructure. Mayor Yenni also outlined continued efforts by his administration to obtain grant funding to build out the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and provide adequate resources to support and protect our first responders (police, fire, EMS). Finally, he stressed the importance and value of continued regional collaboration and training. He described the exemplary response by state, parish and local law enforcement, fire service and emergency medical personnel following a recent machete attack on a TSA Agent at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport on March 20th and an EF-1 tornado that touched down in northwest Kenner on April 27.

Kenner's **Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Doug Dodt**, provided an overview of the City's incident management capabilities and described municipal operations during and following a major storm event.

Police Lieutenant Marc Ortiz outlined local law enforcement operations that would take place in the event of a major storm. **Fire Chief John Hellmers** and members of his staff were on hand to discuss that agency's responsibilities and activities during a major storm event.

Also attending were **Jefferson Parish Councilman Ben Zahn, City Councilwoman-At-Large Maria DeFrancesch, and Councilman Michael Sigur.** These elected officials, as well as **City Councilman-At-Large Keith Conley and Councilmen Keith Reynaud, Leonard Cline, Dominick Impastato, and Gregory Carroll** have all demonstrated their support of the Office of Emergency Management and continue to promote effective information sharing between City officials, residents and business owners during and following a severe weather event. A representative of the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** has attended the meeting every year and members from the **Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness** also work closely with Kenner's administration. Both agencies provide continuing support, resources and valuable feedback to Kenner officials.

Charles Hudson, Director of Jefferson Parish Emergency Management provided detailed information on parish-wide emergency planning, evacuation decision-making, and the level of coordination amongst municipal, parish, state and federal agencies during a major event. In addition, several key preparedness initiatives undertaken by the Parish were discussed: Residents were urged to sign up for *JP Alert* community alert system. Businesses and emergency contractors should sign up or renew their re-entry placards. Residents with significant medical needs were encouraged to register with the *Parish Special Needs Registry*. With the advent of more detailed National Weather Service (NWS) surge mapping capabilities, residents are strongly urged to closely monitor and heed surge advisories in addition to hurricane storm advisories. The establishment of Points of Distribution (POD) sites, if conditions warrant, was also discussed. **Ron Perry, St. Charles Parish Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness,** discussed that parish's extensive disaster preparedness and response activities. St. Charles parish sits just west of Kenner, and maintaining a close working relationship with surrounding communities ensures that Kenner officials have a complete picture of conditions throughout the entire region and can adequately respond to any mutual aid request, if necessary. Command personnel from **Louisiana State Police Troop B** were on hand to discuss their law enforcement and evacuation operations during a disaster, including Contraflow. The **Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD)** discussed their traffic management and highway maintenance activities as well as their considerable activities during regional evacuation operations.

Officials from the **Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health** discussed public health initiatives and hospital coordination activities undertaken by that agency during and following a major storm. Representatives from **Ochsner Medical Center** and **East Jefferson General Hospital,** as well as **EJGH Emergency Medical Service (EMS),** discussed equipment and personnel staging, medical care and emergency services provided in Kenner as well as the surrounding area during storm events. Both hospitals train and plan year round with state, parish and local emergency managers, law enforcement and fire departments, ensuring a coordinated response to any manmade or natural disaster.

The **Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services** addressed their participation in statewide mass care / sheltering operations and described the assistance they provide to parish authorities in processing evacuees. Residents were urged to pre-register for *Disaster Supplemental Nutritional Program (DSNAP)* benefits. **Jim Hufft, Jefferson Parish Public School System's Director of Emergency Preparedness,** provided information on coordination with local officials on closures and re-opening of public schools throughout the Parish. **Rafael Saddy** of the **Latin American Civic Association of Louisiana (LACAL)** described assistance to Kenner's considerable Hispanic population in the event of a major storm. LACAL provides Spanish language interpreter services to the EOC and works closely with **Kenner's Hispanic Resource Center** year round to address local resident needs.

A representative of the **New Orleans Aviation Board Communications Office** discussed storm related conditions and activities affecting air operations at Louis Armstrong International Airport. **Major Michael Desalvo,** who commands the Airport detachment of **Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office** deputies and other law enforcement officers at the facility, addressed coordinating emergency plans with Kenner police. Storm preparedness activities include enhanced security and traffic controls around the facility and air evacuation operations when appropriate. It was stressed that the Airport cannot shelter residents during a storm and the facility will be closed to the public. **Chief Dave Tibbets,** who manages the **Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighter Division** at the Airport, provided insight into his agencies activities and storm preparations at the facility.

Utility companies in attendance included **Entergy, ATMOS Energy and Veolia Wastewater** Representatives provided information on pre-storm maintenance initiatives, pre-staging of equipment and repair crews, and

embedding personnel in the City or Parish EOC to better coordinate response. Plans for rapid deployment of personnel for restorative operations following a significant storm event were discussed by all three utilities.

Chris Laborde of the **New Orleans Regional Planning Commission** provided information concerning monthly meetings of a **Public Private Partnership**, a valuable resource which members of Mayor Yenni's staff and our Police and Fire Departments regularly attend.

Representatives from the **Pontchartrain Center** management staff were on hand to discuss that facility's usefulness for staging and other activities.

The **Jefferson Parish Employees Federal Credit Union** provided information on emergency preparation and services for members during a disaster.

Also in attendance were representatives from the **East Jefferson Levee District**, including **Interim Director Derek Boese**. EJLD works closely with Kenner administrators, public works, police, and emergency management officials throughout the year concerning levee conditions, maintenance and security. During a major storm, the Levee Board increases surveillance along the entire river and lake levee systems, appraising federal, state, parish and local officials on levee conditions and activities, and coordinating closure of critical flood gates all along the systems. The **East Jefferson Levee District Police Department** is one of three specialized police agencies in the region headed by **Superintendent Robert Garner** of the **South Louisiana Flood Protection Authority - East**. That agency provided information on their plans for increased levee patrols, monitoring and emergency response in support of local law enforcement during storm events.

As a community surrounded by water and one that is located on the mighty Mississippi River, maritime safety and security is a primary concern of local officials. The **U.S. Coast Guard** works year round with emergency managers to monitor river conditions and traffic; responding to maritime emergencies; and addressing homeland security concerns. They provide training for our first responders and promote boating safety. If it were to become necessary during a storm, the agency would be called upon to support local air, waterborne and urban search and rescue operations. A Coast Guard representative addressed these various issues with the group.

Mary Vernoy of the **United States Coast Guard Auxiliary** detailed the capabilities of a local emergency communications (EMCOMM) team, which embeds with the City of Kenner at the EOC providing essential backup communications during major storm events. Recently, the City of Kenner was able to secure a federal grant through Jefferson Parish to acquire new Ham Radio equipment for the EMCOMM team.

Lester Millet, III, Planning Director for the **Port of South Louisiana** located in Reserve, Louisiana, was on hand to provide information on maritime hurricane preparedness all along the Lower Mississippi River. The Port provides Kenner officials with daily alerts concerning river conditions, maritime safety issues, vessel traffic, homeland security concerns, and hazardous materials incidents along the vital waterway.

Major David Worthy of the **Salvation Army** and **Gibbie McMillon** of **Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief** were in attendance to discuss their organizations' considerable and much appreciated contributions to disaster relief. The Salvation Army most recently supported the Kenner Police Department during a large scale active shooter exercise, feeding hundreds of first responders. Volunteers from the Baptist Disaster Relief organization were part of a large effort that served many residents and responders throughout the region after Hurricane Katrina.

A representative of **Walgreens** described that company's extensive continuity planning and its commitment to reopen as quickly as possible following a disaster to serve community needs.

City agencies, including **Legal, Finance, Public Works, Kenner Television (K-TV), Information Technology and Telecommunications, Community Development, Human Resources, Purchasing, Inspection and Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, Clerk of Court, and Fleet Management** all participate in Kenner's emergency planning activities and representatives from a number of these agencies contributed to the meeting.

In addition to the attendees at this recent meeting, Kenner's Office of Emergency Management also works closely with the **Regional Transit Authority (RTA)** to ensure local bus service along pre-determined lines during designated evacuation periods. We collaborate with the **American Red Cross** concerning the establishment of post-storm emergency shelters when appropriate and necessary. Our flood control efforts also include close coordination with the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** during Flood Fight conditions and concerning construction along the levee system in Kenner. We also plan and train with local railroads,

including **AMTRAK**, **Canadian National** and **Union Pacific**, to address any emergencies that might affect rail lines running through the region. Another important partner is **Vineyard Church**, whose community supportive congregation brings considerable resources to address relief and volunteer needs following a disaster. **Cox Communications** and **AT&T** are other utilities that work closely with Kenner officials to restore service to residents and businesses as quickly as possible after a storm. The **Esplanade Mall** management staff and many other local retailers communicate with City officials concerning restoration of services following a declared disaster.

Mayor Yenni's staff and our Police and Fire Departments are active members of the **Jefferson Parish Emergency Management Advisory Committee (PEMAC) / Homeland Security Committee**, the **Jefferson Parish Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)** and the **Region 1 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)**.

"Kenner's city administration works year round to develop and sustain close relationships with our regional response partners" said Mayor Michael Yenni. "Our police, fire, public works, and entire administrative staff are committed to working in a coordinated and cooperative manner to prepare, respond to and recover effectively from any disaster."

As we enter the 2015 hurricane season, Kenner residents and business owners should feel confident that City of Kenner officials and employees stand prepared to respond sufficiently to storm events. Year-round planning, training and coordination ensures that all of Kenner's agencies are capable of responding in a unified fashion to meet storm challenges and adequately address the needs of our community.

KENNER'S RESPONSE PARTNERS UNITED IN PURPOSE ... COMMITTED TO TEAM WORK



Douglas Dodt is the city of Kenner's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Dodt can be reached at 471-2100 or oem@kenner.la.us. For additional information on any of the programs mentioned, visit Kenner's Emergency Preparedness webpage at www.kenner.la.us/pages/section_6_77.asp.

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