



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

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NINE YEARS AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA KENNER'S STORM DEFENSES GREATLY IMPROVED

Kenner, LA. – Nine years after Hurricane Katrina blasted Kenner and the rest of the metropolitan area, massive improvements by the federal government in the east bank levee protection system, along with safe houses and other improvements at the two Kenner pumping stations, have significantly improved the city's storm defenses.

"I am very proud to say the city is better protected than it ever has been," Kenner Mayor Michael Yenni said. "Kenner is also approaching its pre-Katrina condition when it comes to playgrounds, city buildings and infrastructure damaged by the storm. That is a testament to the perseverance and dedication by city workers, as well as our community, over the past nine years."

The hurricane, which damaged approximately 2,800 homes in the city, also caused an estimated \$4 million to \$4.5 million in damage to the city's playgrounds, gyms and other recreational facilities, said Ken Marroccoli, director of the Kenner Recreation Department.

That included \$2 million in damage to the lighting systems at the city's playgrounds and another \$500,000 to \$600,000 in damage to the gym floors.

Marroccoli estimated that he is still working with FEMA on about 10 percent of the recreation-related damages from Katrina.

In the area of streets, Public Works Director Jose Gonzalez said an estimated \$25 million in Katrina damage to major streets throughout the city was completed earlier this year as part of the federal Paths to Progress program. Most of that damage was caused by heavy trucks handling debris pickup in the aftermath of the storm.

Kenner has also received about \$2 million for the repair of neighborhood streets. City officials are currently pursuing another \$20 million to \$25 million to repair minor streets under the federal Flooded Streets Program, Gonzalez said.

The Corps of Engineers has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to fortify floodwalls and raise levees, including a completely rebuilt West Return Levee on the city's western edge that is both taller and sturdier, Gonzalez said.

In addition, all drainage pump stations along the lakefront in Kenner and throughout the east bank of Jefferson Parish have been improved and protected, Gonzalez said. All of the projects were designed to protect against a 100-year storm, he said.

The work includes safe houses at both the Duncan Canal and Elmwood pump stations. Workers can safely operate those pump stations during a hurricane and also have automated controls to activate the nearby Parish Line pump station that protects along its western boundary.

Yenni said he's also excited about the proposed \$25 million consolidation of the East Jefferson Levee District's operations, maintenance and police facilities into one huge complex in south Kenner.

"Having the top agency in charge of levee protection on the east bank located in our city can only benefit our residents," Yenni said.

While residents should feel good about the level of Kenner's hurricane preparedness, it's also important to take storms seriously and for residents to have their own evacuation plans in order.

The city's storm plans and storm response has been upgraded considerably since Katrina with the help of a new Office of Emergency Management, headed by Doug Dodt, as well as an Emergency Operations Center in south Kenner.

Plenty of helpful information is available at the city's hurricane preparedness site:

http://www.kenner.la.us/59/Storm_Preparedness_Presentation_2014_v2.pdf.

"I'd love to be able to say we are now hurricane-proof," Yenni said. "But we all know when it comes to Mother Nature and hurricanes, all you can do is to always be as prepared as possible."

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