

## COVER STORY

# Hurricane Katrina

## What lies ahead for IAAO members

*New Orleans, August 31, 2005—Rescue activities continue into the night at the main staging area at I-10 and Causeway. Victims of Hurricane Katrina continue to be evacuated out of the city of New Orleans by bus. Photo by Win Henderson/FEMA*

It wasn't the strongest hurricane to ever hit the Gulf Coast, but Hurricane Katrina is well on its way to earning the unfortunate distinction of being the most devastating natural disaster in U.S. history. While the news coverage concentrates on search and rescue missions and relief efforts, we know that, out of camera view, there are legions of assessors trying to do the important work of determining property values, under circumstances they may never have imagined, so that funds can be obtained for recovery. They are doing their jobs while their own homes may have been damaged or destroyed and their families displaced.

During these difficult times, IAAO is here to help members in whatever way we can. Do you need temporary housing? Additional appraisers in the field? Replacement equipment? We are happy to act as a resource for members who need assistance. We encourage you to contact us and tell us about your needs so we can find ways to respond to them. IAAO Marketing Manager Leann Ritter is coordinating this effort. She can be contacted at [ritter@iaao.org](mailto:ritter@iaao.org).

We are also helping by hosting a fund drive for disaster relief and investigating ways to ease the financial burden for those members in affected areas.

In this issue, we are trying to do what we can as a publication by providing information and some perspectives on what happens after a disaster. Larry Stein, in his article, "Disaster USA. A perspective on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina," discusses how assessors can handle some of the challenges they will face. He writes from the experience of being in a jurisdiction in a tornado-prone area that had to cope with a particularly devastating tornado season. His article also provides excellent ideas for jurisdictions that have yet to face a natural disaster on how to prepare for when that disaster occurs.

*Houston Chronicle* reporter Dan Feldstein writes about how his city may be changed forever as it welcomes displaced hurricane survivors into its midst. Much of his article is uplifting and focuses on the positive aspects of change under difficult circumstances.

In "Wildfire Summer of 2002," Mark Reddy looks back on the time when his county was being consumed by wildfires. The valuation challenge they faced was how to determine the market value of damaged property when they had no sales precedent for doing so. Three years of experience provides a measure for how well they fared. But just as important, Mark wanted to share, in a related article, his reflections on the emotional experience of working during a natural disaster and what it's like to visit those same areas after the passage of time.

In the "Assessors Role in Tax Increment Financing," John Ragan offers a preview of what's ahead in the rebuilding process. TIF districts are one tool that can be used to reestablish property values in areas that have had their tax base eroded or destroyed.

As an additional way to bring perspective and hope to those now facing this great disaster—we have asked members in and near affected areas and those who have experienced natural disasters in their own jurisdictions to share their thoughts on the hurricane's impact on people's lives, and what lies ahead for members of the assessing profession.

### Here is what some members have to say.

**Vergie Booty, La. Tax Commission, Baton Rouge, LA**

*The devastation in New Orleans is more than even the news coverage can show. We have so many people still missing and feared dead, we have families that have been separated, we have babies in NICU that were evacuated to Baton Rouge hospitals*



and we do not know where their parents are and we have thousands here, without a home, living in shelters.

The doctors and nurses are arriving to help without any place to live while they are here. All saleable property in Baton Rouge has been sold within a week of the storm and all rental property is full. Baton Rouge has doubled in size in 3 days and the infrastructure is unable to meet the needs of our new residents, but we are desperately trying.

The IAAO can understand that one of the problems the assessors in our state have is how to certify a tax roll that is complete but a great percentage of the homes and businesses on that roll are under water and we fear will never be inhabitable again. While tax dollars are not at the top of the priority list at this moment, these dollars are vital to maintain the infrastructure in New Orleans and other affected parishes. As soon as we have all of our residents accounted for, we must begin the arduous task of reappraising and assessing all of the property in these parishes.

We thank IAAO and the whole world for all of the concern, prayers, and financial aid. God bless each of you and keep us in your prayers.

**Jewette Farley, CAE, Consultant,  
Ruston, Louisiana**

Thank you for your concern about our plight from Katrina. Can you imagine having some or all of the following happen to you or your loved ones? Losing your home, your job, your possessions, your schooling opportunities for your children, your economy, your culture, your cities and your countryside. Almost everything that you have or have known is gone. Most of the citizens in the southern part of my state of Louisiana, and the southern parts of Mississippi, and Alabama have done just that. The vast majority have lost them all. Can you then began to grasp that it may be months, if not years and maybe never, before these everyday needs can be restored? I am sitting here writing this short message to my IAAO family not knowing if my Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama friends are even alive at this time. I know one thing for sure, that they are hurting, and I know that they need our prayers, concern, and help.

**John Griffin, PPS, Osceola County,  
Florida**

The assessors in the affected areas have a massive job in front of them to determine what is destroyed, what is damaged, and how much damage is done. They may not be able to contact their staff, probably have damage to their own offices, and may not have vehicles and gas. It is critical that they have generators for their offices and two-way radios.

The first thing they need to do is get their GIS/Mapping Department up to speed. If they can get post-storm aerial pictures, then interface them with their GIS maps, they may be able to assess much of the damage from their desks. They will need outside help to get the job done.

**Richard Petree, Chief Appraiser, Tay-  
lor County Central Appraisal District,  
Abilene, Texas**

**Texas Opens Doors to Katrina Victims**

Houston has become home to thousands of victims of Hurricane Katrina with many of the homeless making plans to stay. Throughout Texas, churches and religiously affiliated organizations are opening their facilities to refugees of the storm. Major buildings like the Astro-dome are housing thousands and food



New Orleans, LA, August 31, 2005—Stranded residents in Jefferson Parish are brought to a bridge area by boat to await transportation by truck to the main staging area at I-10 and Causeway. Photo by Win Henderson/FEMA



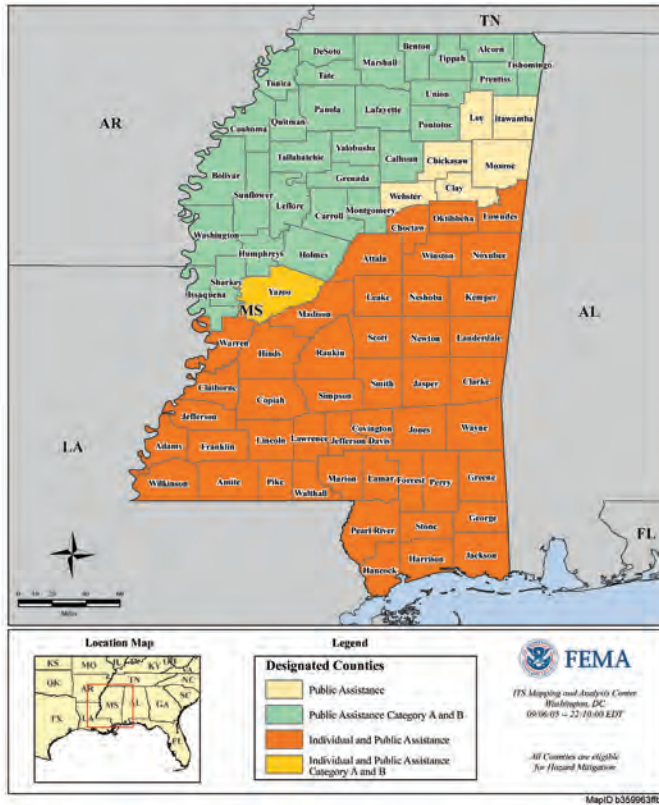
New Orleans, LA, August 31, 2005—Members of the FEMA USAR task force from Missouri perform a secondary search of a house that is flooded by Hurricane Katrina. Photo by Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA



New Orleans, LA, 9/4/05 – A sign on a piece of scrap metal on Magazine Street calls for help after New Orleans was hit hard by Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans is being evacuated because of flooding caused by hurricane Katrina. Photo by Liz Roll



**FEMA-1604-DR, Mississippi**  
**Disaster Declaration as of 09/06/2005**



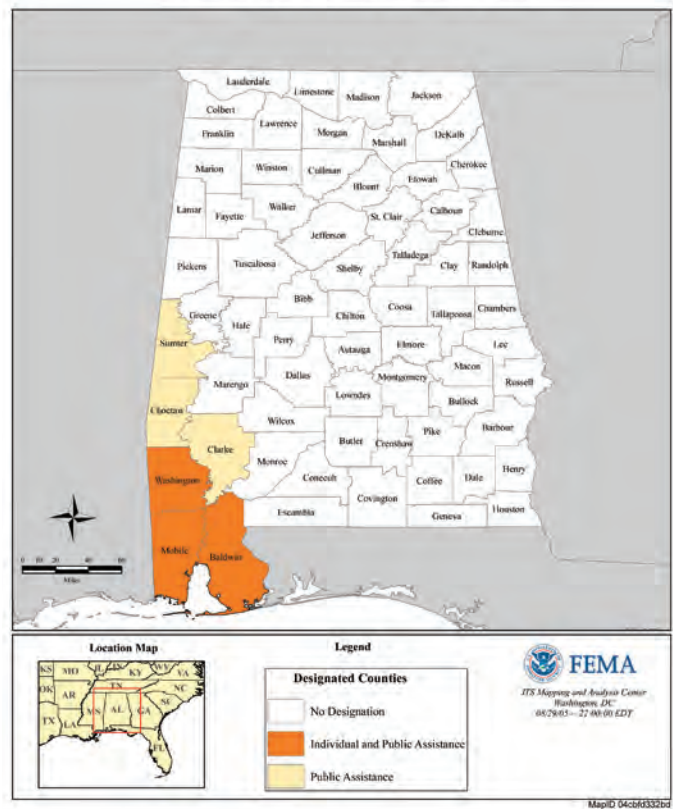
**FEMA-1603-DR, Louisiana**  
**Disaster Declaration as of 08/29/2005**



**FEMA-1602-DR, Florida**  
**Disaster Declaration as of 09/06/2005**



**FEMA-1605-DR, Alabama**  
**Disaster Declaration as of 08/29/2005**



Federal Emergency Management Agency maps graphically identify the hardest hit areas.

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*and clothing is pouring into all types of charities to help victims recover. Texas is particularly understanding of the plight of those from Louisiana and Mississippi, as numerous storms have ravaged the Texas coast for decades. However, nothing of this magnitude has hit Texas.*

*Since the rebuilding of those cities most dramatically affected will take months to years, Texas communities are preparing for their visitors to stay a long while. Children are enrolling in Texas schools and thousands are expected to assimilate into jobs and remain in the state.*

**Kenneth M. Wilkinson, Lee County Property Appraiser**

*All of the employees of the Lee County Property Appraiser's Office wish to extend their heartfelt sympathies to those jurisdictions currently recovering from the emotional trauma these events bring forth.*

*We can attest that there is a life after disaster.*

*Open your arms to the LOVE that is coming your way and your faith in human kind will be restored. ■*



*New Orleans, La., August 20, 2005—Neighborhoods are flooded in New Orleans Photo by Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA*