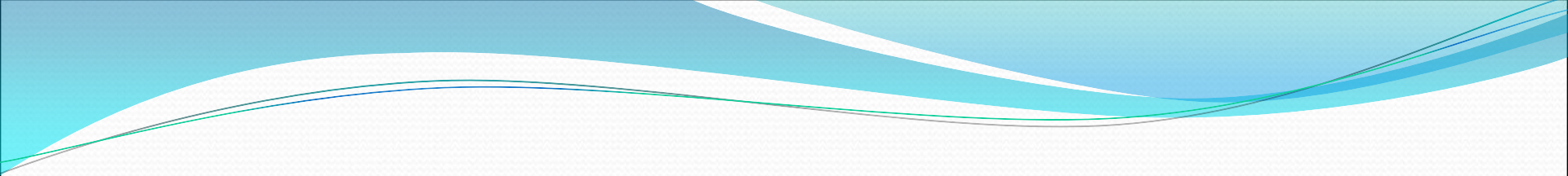


# Disaster Recovery and Response: A View from Community

Prepared by:

Attorney Ranie T. Thompson

Director, CrescentCare Legal Services

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- Presentation prepared by Attorney Ranie T. Thompson and is based on personal and professional experiences and conversations with survivors and advocates on the ground, as well as FEMA staff in Louisiana and Washington DC, post-Katrina and Rita.
  - There is often conflicting information from these sources.
  - The intent is not to blame, but to help government agencies, NGOs, community partners, survivors, etc. in disaster planning and management for future disasters.

# Disasters

- Events, natural or man-made, that disables a community's social functioning.
- Small or large scale, can be equally devastating on a community
  - Ask any person/family/community that's dealt with a disaster, and they'll tell you this.
- Often results in
  - Significant physical damage or destruction
  - Loss of life
  - Drastice changes to the environment



# Louisiana and the Gulf Coast Region: The last 10 years

- Ivan (2004)
- Katrina (2005)
- Rita (2005)
- Wilma (2005)
- Gustav (2008)
- Ike (2008)
- BP Oil Spill (2010)
- Isaac (2012)
- Assumption Parish Sinkhole (2012)
- Severe Winter Storm (Jan. 2013)
- Tropical Storms
- Tornadoes

# Katrina

- destruction of property
- Estimates of more than 1,800 lives lost
- Category 5 storm with winds gusts up to 125 miles
- Widespread flooding
- Streets and Homes inundated with 5...7...9 feet of water
- Power outages
- Storm surges

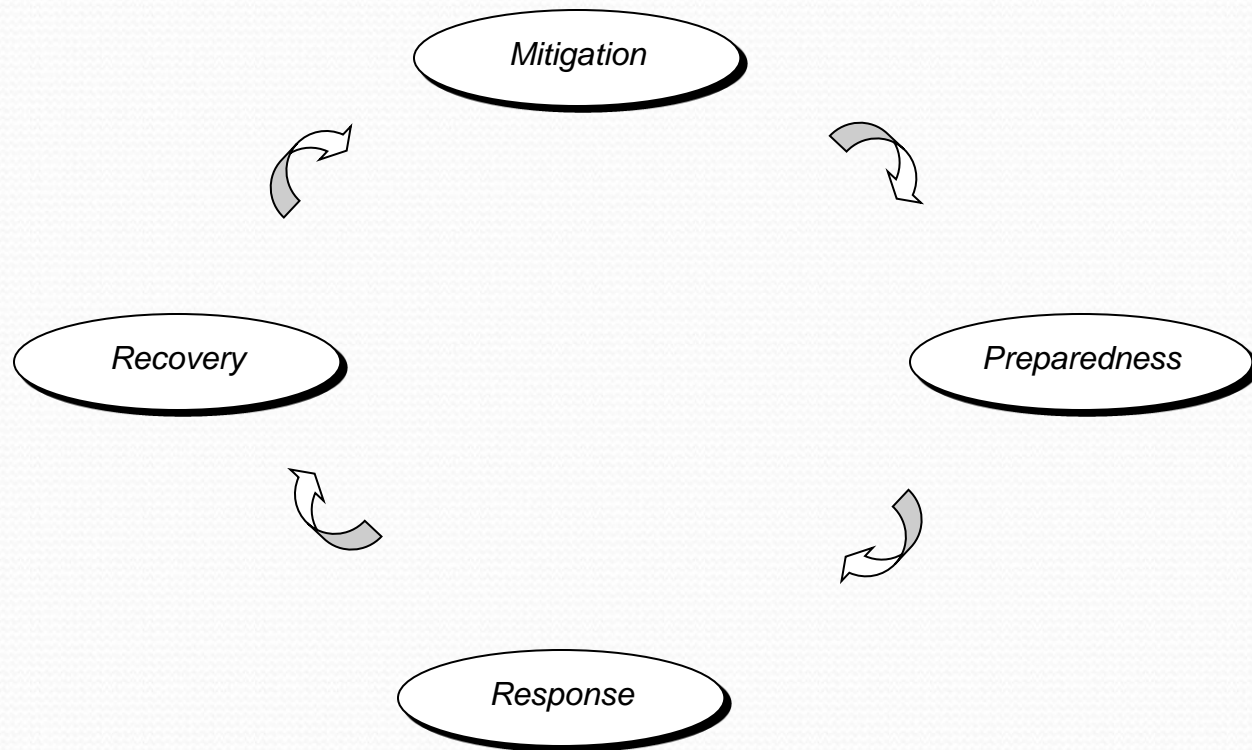


# The Levee Breaches

- The loss of life and property damage was worsened by breaks in the levees that separate New Orleans from surrounding lakes.
- Estimated that 80% of New Orleans was under flood water by August 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Caused by levee failures from Lake Pontchartrain.
- Strong winds, heavy rainfall and storm surge led to breaks in the levee **after the storm passed**, leaving some parts of New Orleans under 20 feet of water.

# ANATOMY OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

# The Four Phases of Emergency Management





# Post-Katrina Response and Recovery

# FEMA: IHP and Government Grants

- Problems:
  - mistake-ridden;
  - lack of clarity and coordination;
  - Communication;
  - Bureaucratic
  - Oppressive
- Lesson: communication, transparency, consistency, recognition of due process rights of people.
- More left to do:
  - governments are now faced with reimbursement denials from FEMA.
  - Residents are facing recoupment claims
  - Sandy victims

# Louisiana Road Home Program

- Disbursed \$9+billion CDBG funds
- Problems:
  - Disparate impact
  - Delay in disbursements
  - Lack of transparency
  - Administrative costs heavy
  - Bureaucratic
  - Inconsistent
  - waste, mismanagement, theft
  - Incompetencies
- Community Response:
  - Organize
  - Advocate for change
  - Sue
- Lessons:
  - Ethics and accountability
  - Community awareness
  - Equity and Fairness



# Orleans Parish City Ordinance #26031: Demolition/Bulldozing

- Problems:

- Errors with inspections
- Homes torndown in error
- Corruption and waste
- Notice to property owners still displaced
- Delay in payouts of insurance claims
- Delay in RH grant disbursements
- Costs prohibitive to low-income, wage earners w/o the grant and insurance \$

- Community Response:

- Organize
- Litigation

- Lessons:

- Constitutional Rights must be protected
- Procedures required in light of disaster impact on people effected by ordinance.
- No room for errors.

# Other Areas of Concern

- **Economy**

- Tourism dependent
- Lack of affordable housing, transportation and other resources effected many residents' ability to return

- **Land-Use and Development**

- Zoning and planning without community
- Recovery Czar
- Historic Preservation
- New developments in light of future post-disaster infracture needs and businesses likely to return.

- **Education**

- Pre-K issues of corruption, mismanagement, and old structures in need of repair
- 124 public schools, 16 relatively unscathed.
- 60k students, 4k teachers, plus other employees effected
- Rebuilding plans challenges
  - To build or not to build
  - Location
- Vouchers, etc.

# Lessons from Katrina

Community vs. Government  
(Response and Recovery)



# What we (community)saw?

- Lack of preparation
- Lack of coordination
  - Preparation: evacuation/safety, shelter
  - Response: food, water, shelter, medical services, search and rescue
  - Recovery: food, housing, search and rescue, security,
- Failure to communicate or miscommunication/misinformation
- Lack of uniformity in delivery of assistance
- Focus on
  - Buildings
  - Economics
  - Personnel/staffing
  - Organizational structuring/re-structuring
  - Grants and other sources of funding
- Little attention for people's right to return and self-determine

# What we (community)saw?

- Greed, Self-interest and promotion
- Bribery
- Corruption
- Backdoor deals
- Abuse/Denial of Civil Rights
- Re-victimization
- Disenfranchisement
- Disrespect
- No thought for culture, history of community in the rebuilding process.
- A government DISCONNECTED from its people.



# Lesson#1: People-centered Approach to Disaster Management

- Goal: Holistic, Sustainable Recovery
- Thinking and Planning shift
  - From: staffing, personnel, organizational and rebuilding infracture.
  - To: needs of the people, community
- No community recovers and thrives without the people...from the least to the greatest.



# How do you shift your focus?

- Become culturally competent as you develop your plans.
  - Indepth knowledge, understanding and awareness of cultures, traditions, history and relationships of each group with government.
  - Identify vulnerable members of the community.
- Collaboration and Partnership building

# New Orleans pre-Katrina

- Low-income/Low-wage earners/Impoverished
- 23% of residents lived below federal poverty level
- 68% of residents were African-American
  - 35% below the federal poverty level
  - Homeowners (generational inheritances)
- Access to transportation to evacuate.
- Dependent upon social service programs
- This played a large part in the ability of people to heed the warnings to evacuate.



# New Orleans

- Homeless
- Elderly
- Disabled
- Immigrants
- Nursing care facilities
- Hospitals
- Incarcerated



## Lesson #2:

# Disasters don't discriminate.

- Neither should your management plan.
- Holistic, sustainable recovery.
- No one group should be isolated or left out in favor of another because of some perceived view of value imposed by persons in positions of authority.

# Lesson #3: Ethics, Accountability, Transparency

- Community expects you to be ethical and will hold you accountable for you actions or lack of action.
- Disaster present fertile ground for corruption.
- Community trust is at stake.



# Lesson#4: Partnerships and Collaborations are key.

- Community organizers
- Legal Services/Public Interest lawyers and advocates
- Healthcare providers
- Social Workers
- Mental Health Professionals



# Lesson #5: Communication is Key

- **Remember the 5 W's and the How?**
  - **Who** will report the message?
  - **What** is the message? (concise, plain language; diverse)
  - **When** will it be done? (too soon, too late, frequency)
  - **Where** will it be delivered from? (location/place)
  - **Why** are you doing it? (reason)
  - **How** will it be done? (modes of communication)

# Lesson#6: More work to do.

- Levees still need attention
- Coastal restoration
- Environmental Protections
- Document storage and record keeping
- Shelters (in-state and out of state)
- Transportation
- Critical Needs Staging
- Medical Care
- Communication
  - Interstate
  - Intrastate
  - Parish to Parish
  - Agency to Agency



# Final Tip as you plan:

- Does it consider my 89 year old grandmother.
  - Homeowner
  - Rural community
  - No cellphone
  - No computer/internet
  - Non-driver



# Resources

- Louisiana
  - La. R.S. Title 29, Chapters 6 and 9
  - La Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ~ [www.goshep.la.gov](http://www.goshep.la.gov)
  - LSBA Disaster Response Handbook ~ [http://www.lsba.org/2007Documents/LSBA\\_DISASTER\\_HANDBOOK.pdf](http://www.lsba.org/2007Documents/LSBA_DISASTER_HANDBOOK.pdf)
- FEMA
  - [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
  - 44 CFR Part 201
  - Robert T. Stafford Act Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (amended 4/2013, Pub. Law 100-707)
- Other
  - [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
  - EJW Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMbLncaytNE>