

Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans

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KATRINA 10 PROGRESS... DEVASTATION TO RECOVERY TO RESTORATION TO REBUILDING, 10 YEARS LATER

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CEDRIC GRANT

Hurricane Katrina represented the greatest challenge ever faced by the Sewerage & Water Board and the City of New Orleans. With 80% of the city flooded, thousands of New Orleanians lost their lives and their property. The Sewerage & Water Board

almost lost an entire infrastructure built over. The impact of Hurricane Katrina to the board's water, sewer, drainage and power generation systems was devastating.

Over 300 Sewerage & Water Board

Executive Director Cedric Grant is greeted by Bob Moenian, Chief of Drainage Operations and Gerald Tilton, Drainage Superintendent at Drainage Pumping Station #1, the oldest pumping station in the city.



employees manned their stations at board facilities throughout the city during Hurricane Katrina and during the catastrophic flooding that followed. These Sewerage & Water Board 'Katrina Heroes' literally risked their lives and their personal safety to salvage and repair vital Sewerage & Water Board facilities and equipment that made it possible to dewater the city in only 11 days after the levee breaches were repaired. Some of these 'Katrina Heroes' far exceeded the call of duty by rescuing city residents from flood waters and providing needed resources. The spirit of these 'Katrina Heroes' and the one thousand plus that returned have been the foundation that has carried us through recovery, restoration, and rebuilding.



Meeting Press

August 29, 2015 New Orleans commemorates the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The entire country is looking at New Orleans and how far we have come in the rebuilding of our city and its infrastructure. Indeed, we have come a long way in the 10 years of rebuilding. What we have accomplished in these last 10 years is the ultimate testimony to our resilience in the face of insurmountable challenges.

No other American city has ever

experienced such massive devastation in the aftermath of a disaster like Hurricane Katrina. But as the saying goes, 'straight roads do not make skillful drivers'.

The Sewerage and Water Board has learned valuable lessons on how to deal with large-scale disasters through our experience with Katrina. Since then, we have faced and overcome many other challenges – like Hurricanes Rita, Ike and Gustav and tropical storms Lee and Isaac. The Sewerage and Water Board is an integral and critical part of the city's recovery story. The board turned tragedy into an opportunity for change and reform while going from recovery to resilience. For without the essential life services of water, sewer, and drainage services, there would have been no city in which to return.

The Sewerage and Water Board's mission is to provide safe drinking water to everyone in New Orleans; to remove waste water for safe return to the environment; to drain away storm water; to provide water for fire protection; to provide information about products and services; and to do all of this continuously at a reasonable cost to the community. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina challenged our ability to achieve our mission. But we have faced the challenge and continue to rebuild smarter, stronger,

reliable and resilient. We want our customers to get to know us better and we want to remind customers that the board and its employees will always be dedicated and committed to fulfilling its mission.

As we made plans for the future, we envisioned progressive and comprehensive changes and reforms that would positively impact our delivery of services to the customer. A year ago, the Board of Directors was restructured, in order, to diversify and strengthen public advocacy. Additionally, the Sewerage & Water Board has gained efficiency and effectiveness through its integration with the City Department of Public Works. As a result of the restructuring, all capital improvement and infrastructure projects are fully coordinated in construction, acquisition, improvement, maintenance, and promotion of any public improvement or project.

The Sewerage and Water Board has completed the majority of the rebuilding and repairs to its facilities damaged by Hurricane Katrina with funding provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). To date, FEMA has obligated \$682 million to restoration of the system infrastructure. Vital drainage improvements are ongoing with \$1 billion in SELA urban drainage projects throughout the city. And, an additional \$48 million from FEMA for other drainage projects, a Hazard Mitigation Grant for the Water Hammer

Project, designed to reduce the loss of water pressure and the retrofitting and hardening of the power plant further enhance board operations. Our projects on wetlands restoration in Bayou Bienvenue and the green infrastructure grant program for neighborhood organizations have garnered national and international attention.

Committed to aggressive rebuilding, Sewerage and Water Board forces completed over 31,000 work orders and service requests in 2014. This includes over 1,000 emergency requests such as sewer overflows and customers without water. The agency completed nearly 1,200 sewer mains, 1,500 water mains, nearly 10,000 water service requests, over 1,000 hydrants; and 1,100 valves. It met or exceeded all requirements of the consent decree, including 4,800 preventive maintenance activities at 83 sewer stations, inspected and exercised all sewer valves, cleaned nearly 1.5 million feet of sewer mains, inspected 750,000 feet of sewer mains, and inspected over 8,000 sewer manholes.

The federal government has invested \$14.5 billion for a 139-mile flood protection system including the most powerful pumps in the world and a 1.8 mile, 26 foot high surge barrier. Right now, in the city of New Orleans, millions of dollars in water sewer, drainage and roadway improvements are underway. This is one of the largest infrastructure projects ever for the city – one that is



Dedication of the Annex Building at Central Yard.

creating thousands of jobs requiring new skillsets. And, the GE Foundation has stepped in with a \$1.5 million grant to Delgado College, designed to fund a program to help the board train the next generation of water infrastructure personnel.

The board is moving forward with an on-going Capital Program. It is currently implementing a \$3.3 billion capital improvement program comprised of over 600 projects that will create 25,000 construction jobs across the city. Through the rate increase approved by New Orleans City Council in 2012, bond rating upgrades for sewer and water, and the recent bond sale, S&WB's capital improvement program for sewer and water is funded for the first time in 25 years. This work is being paired with the City's \$1 billion recovery program

combining to create one of the largest infrastructure improvement efforts in the history of New Orleans.

We have accomplished so much in the last ten years. And moving forward, we maintain our commitment to the relentless pursuit of progress. To that end, I predict that the Sewerage and Water Board as it marks its 116th Anniversary in August, 2015 will continue to be a global model in the recovery of America's Most Interesting City, as we continue to provide quality of life services for over 384,000 residents and 9.5 million visitors a year. There is no better legacy and testament to the strength and the resilience of the Sewerage & Water Board.

You can view the entire Katrina 10 book at www.subno.org.