



“RE-BUILDING THE CITY’S WATER SYSTEMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY”

Sewerage & Water Board OF NEW ORLEANS

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The Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans said today it is fully capable of operating Drainage Pumping No. 6 during all types of weather conditions.

Board officials said the S&WB Drainage Department's well-trained and experienced staff and its skilled mechanical and electrical departments have successfully run the world's largest drainage pumping station since it was built in 1903. Since then, numerous pumps have been added, along with improved electrical systems and technological advances which have improved the capacity and efficiency of the station.

DPS 6 drains a large portion of New Orleans and a section of Jefferson Parish. The Board, in making the comments, was responding to statements made earlier in the week by Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard who called for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to operate the station during certain rain and lake level events associated with hurricanes.

Tommie A. Vassel, president pro-tem of the Board, said, “It is the hope of the Sewerage and Water Board that President Broussard and the members of the Jefferson Parish Council will agree with us that the major responsibility and focus of the Corps should be the rebuilding of levees and operating the gated structures and temporary pumps they have installed. “It is also our feeling that the operation of Drainage Pump Station No. 6 should be left to the professionals who have operated it efficiently, effectively and professionally since the early 1900s, serving both Orleans and Jefferson Parishes extremely well.”

The Sewerage & Water Board said it is more than adequately prepared for the upcoming Hurricane Season. Staff has begun pre-hurricane season preparation meetings and reviewed plans that are triggered when a hurricane/tropical storm enters the Gulf. This includes the establishment of hurricane watches, stand-by emergency crews, pre-hurricane staging procedures, distribution of emergency equipment, and inventories of supplies needed by assigned personnel.

Vassel said, "The drainage system, while still undergoing maintenance and isolated repairs, is currently operating at 90 per cent which is optimum given the system's built in redundancies." "It's ironic," he said, "that Jefferson Parish is calling for Corps involvement, when Jefferson has been responsible for flooding Orleans Parish twice. On one occasion, just after Katrina and before Rita, they refused to stop illegally pumping into the 17th Street Canal. It took federal intervention to make them cease the pumping. On another occasion in December of 2006, illegal pumping took place which led to street flooding in parts of uptown New Orleans. "It would seem just from these two examples that Jefferson Parish has set the precedent for reckless pumping practices. It stands to reason that if any parish should request Corps oversight of pumping into the 17th Street Canal, it should be Orleans requesting oversight of Jefferson."

Vassel added, "We must take care of the business of drainage, which is what both the citizens of Jefferson and Orleans expect of us. We would not dare request the Corps involvement in operating Station 6 when we know that their chief responsibility must be the operation and maintenance of the gated structures and their accompanying temporary drainage pumps. We would hope that other Jefferson officials agree." He concluded, "We are fully for regional cooperation, but it must be a two-way street. And, comments made by the parish president last week do not help regional cooperation and both sides working together for the best drainage solutions possible for both parishes."