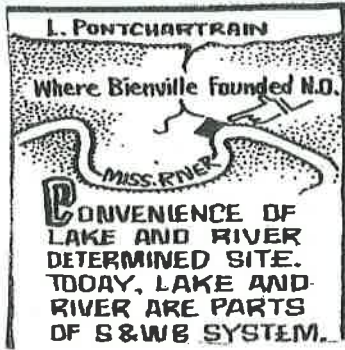


“Tackling The World’s Toughest Drainage Problem . . . With Success!”

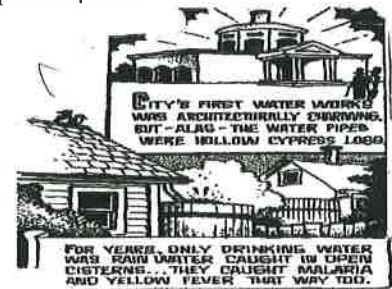


- New Orleans is like a saucer, levees that have been built to keep out the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain serve to keep in all the rain water that falls.

Our Drainage System dates back to the turn of the century. In 1896, the New Orleans Drainage Commission was organized to carry out a master drainage plan that had been developed for the city. Three years later in 1899, the Sewerage and Water Board was authorized by the Louisiana State Legislature to furnish, construct, operate and maintain a water treatment and distribution system and a sanitary sewer system for New Orleans. In 1903, the Drainage Commission was merged with the Sewerage and Water Board in order to consolidate drainage, water and sewerage programs under one agency for more efficient operations. This combined organization retained the title Sewerage and Water Board and remains as such today.

- Because the river levees are higher than the lake levees, most storm runoff is pumped into Lake Pontchartrain. Exceptions are the two (2)-west bank pumping stations and several stations in Eastern New Orleans that pump into the Intracoastal Waterway or the Industrial Canal.
- There are 24 Drainage Pumping Stations in New Orleans. Station personnel are on duty 24-hours a day, seven (7) days a week, 365 days a year.
- There are also thirteen (13) underpass stations, each with two or three pumps that are automatically turned on by rising water. These pumps are checked every day and are monitored by field personnel during rain events.

- There are two important underpass pumping stations that are the responsibility of the State Highway Department and NOT the S&WB. These are on the west bank at the Gen. DeGaulle underpass at the Mississippi River Bridge ramps and on the east bank at the Pontchartrain Expressway at the Southern Railroad tracks at Metairie cemetery.
- The system’s pumping capacity is over 29 billion gallons a day, enough to empty a lake 10 square miles by 13.5 feet deep every 24-hours. That flow rate of 51,273 cubic feet per second is more than the flow rate of the Ohio River, the nation’s fifth largest.
- The S&WB’s drainage network includes approximately 90-miles of open canals and 90 miles of subsurface canals. Many of the subsurface canals are large enough to drive a bus through.
- Generators that provide much of the power for pumps throughout the city are located at the S&WB power plant.



- Operation’s Department crews watch canal water level, monitor weather forecast through a direct tie to the National Weather Service radar system, communicate with other stations and senior management, and keep informed on weather activity around the city. They are accustomed to handling unexpected deluges.
- During a flood there are often rumors and reports to the S&WB and the media that pumps or entire pumping stations are out of service for any one of a variety of reasons. In fact, this is an extremely rare occurrence and the media is asked to confirm such reports with the S&WB before broadcasting them.

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- These reports may be based on observations that the rain has stopped but floodwaters are not receding . This can happen under normal operating conditions when canals and subsurface drains are filled to capacity and must be drawn down before accepting more water.
- Situations vary, but as a general rule the system can handle one inch of rain the first hour and, as the ground becomes saturated, one-half inch per hour thereafter. That’s three inches in five hours. Rainfall at a greater rate than that will probably cause flooding.
- As an example, 10 inches of rain falls in a five-hour period. The rain stops, leaving approximately 7 inches of unpumped water. It will take the system about 14 hours at one-half inch per hour, to remove that much water, assuming that no more rain falls during that 14-hour period.
- In the event of a pumping or power failure, the S&WB will advise city authorities and businesses and residents in areas that might be affected. The S&WB would coordinate with the city’s Office of Emergency Preparedness.
- In some instances, if a pumping station should fail, another could take over part of the load. But because the city is served by different drainage districts it is not possible to drain one area at the expense of another.
- Official information regarding street flooding comes from the City of New Orleans and not the S&WB.
- Routine maintenance on pumps and generator is scheduled in such a way that a minimal amount of equipment is out of service at any one time. It is often possible to return all or part of this equipment to service under emergency conditions.
- The general public can assist the drainage process by removing leaves and debris from street drain openings and by not dumping anything in drains (grass cuttings) that could restrict the drainage.
- Materials dumped in open canals range from mattresses to shopping carts and they will obstruct the drainage flow and sometimes damage the equipment.
- Pumps at most stations are protected by metal screens over the intakes. Debris is removed from the screens by automated or manual rakes and trucked to landfills.
- The drainage system’s largest single pumping facility is DPS No. 6 north of Metairie Road on the 17th Street Canal between Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. It includes 15 pumps—the largest a 14-foot diameter pump capable of pumping 1,100 cubic feet per second. The station has the capacity to pump approximately 10,000 cubic feet per second, or about 75,000 gallons of water per second. DPS No. 6 is one of the world’s largest such pumping stations.
- It is S&WB policy to respond as quickly and completely as possible to media inquiries, although emergency operations may delay this response and information will not be released until it has been confirmed.
- Media inquiries should be directed to Robert Jackson at 504-269-7978 or Brenda Thornton at 504-269-7819.



Community and Intergovernmental
Relations
504-585-2169