

On September 7, 1900, Isaac Kline, head of the local weather bureau in Galveston, Texas, walked briskly along the island's shoreline. Peering out into the ocean, he noticed large, choppy swells undulating toward the beach. He knew this was unusual, but paid no attention to what it symbolized. Twenty-four hours later the city of Galveston would pay a terrible price, as one of the worst **hurricanes** in American history slammed into the island. Over 6,000 people were killed, most of whom drowned in a catastrophic storm surge. The beautiful dream of a city on the rise was all but a memory, and Galveston never fully recovered. In September 1935, Henry Flagler had envisioned the construction of a railroad connecting the Florida Keys to the mainland. Ignoring the fact it was **hurricane** season, Flagler pushed his workers through the sultry summer to complete the job. On Labor Day 1935, a powerful category 5 **hurricane** smashed into the Keys with winds estimated at over 200 mph. The overseas railroad was destroyed, and all of the workers who stayed at Flagler's request were killed. The railroad was never rebuilt, and another dream died. On August 28, 2005, Mayor Ray Nagin, of New Orleans, issued a mandatory evacuation for his city before the arrival of **Hurricane Katrina**. Those who could get out did, but many were left behind. On Monday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, **Hurricane Katrina** unleashed her fury on New Orleans leaving Mayor Nagin to deal with a similar fate, like that of Kline and Flagler. Another city, filled with a glorious history and a bright future, was demolished because of a deadly **hurricane**.

**Katrina** reminded us just how terrible a **hurricane** can be. We tend to forget about the great storms that have ravaged our coastal cities for centuries. They are locked into our memories by the archaic black and white photos we occasionally come across. These pictures represent what happened a long time ago, and the human mind usually disregards any notion that these types of events will repeat themselves. It is human error, which causes history to come full circle, and **Hurricane Katrina** was a reminder of how quickly life can be taken away, if we are not vigilant.

**Katrina** started out as a tropical depression over the southeastern Bahamas on August 23, 2005. The next day it was upgraded to a tropical storm as it lumbered steadily toward south Florida. On Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, Tropical Storm **Katrina** became **Hurricane Katrina**, packing winds in excess of 80 mph, making it a Category 1 on the Saffir Simpson scale, which rates a **hurricane's** intensity from 1 to 5. The storm made its first landfall just north of Miami, FL, killing 12 people and spawning dozens of tornados. Luckily, most of these twisters did not hit populated areas, but **Katrina** was already being noticed for her size and strength. The storm reemerged in the Gulf of Mexico and turned northwest. It then headed north, rapidly intensifying along the way. It reached Category 5 status on August 28<sup>th</sup>, with maximum sustained winds of 175 mph. **Hurricane Katrina** had an estimated pressure of 902mb, making it one of the most powerful storms to manifest over the past century. On August 29, 2005, **Hurricane Katrina** made its' second landfall near Buras-Triumph Louisiana, as a strong category 3 storm, with 125 mph winds. **Katrina** had weakened, but its colossal

size delivered devastating impacts well away from the center. It continued to plow north, lashing the Louisiana/Mississippi coast with high winds and heavy rain. By 11:30am CDT the western eye wall was pummeling downtown New Orleans with wind gusts over 100 mph. Shortly after noon, several sections of the city's levee system collapsed ushering in a surge of water from Lake Ponchartrain to an area that was already well below sea level. The results would prove to be deadly. **Hurricane Katrina** then made a third landfall at Gulfport, Mississippi. A 125 mph sustained wind and a 28ft storm surge destroyed everything in its path, including the famous beachfront casinos that dotted the Mississippi coastline. The storm continued to push inland, weakening slowly, as it spread high winds and heavy flooding all the way up through the Ohio River Valley.

The death toll from **Hurricane Katrina** is estimated at 1,383, but 4,000 individuals still remain missing. Damages are predicted to be a staggering 75 billion dollars, making it the costliest natural disaster to ever strike the United States. Most of the people, who perished, died under the flood of water that ravaged downtown New Orleans and from the catastrophic storm surge in Mississippi. The days following **Hurricane Katrina** would take its toll as more people died because of disease and famine. The globe watched in horror as New Orleans was turned into a third world country, corrupted by virulent looters and raging fires. Help was extremely slow to arrive, and by the time it got there it was too little, too late. Heat stricken, famished, and extremely ill, many elderly and poor families who could not get out perished in and around the Superdome, which was used as a last resort shelter during the storm. With nowhere to go in a city that was filling up with water, because of the levee breach, people started to panic and violence erupted as a result.

So what happened? Why was help so painstakingly slow to arrive for Gulf coast residents? To answer this question we must look at basic human psychology. There is an old belief in our society that certain things only happen to the people next door, and the worst case scenario is never as bad as it seems. Michael D. Brown, Head of FEMA and Homeland Security Undersecretary, did not contact Michael Chertoff, Homeland Security Secretary, to activate emergency response workers, until five hours after **Hurricane Katrina** made landfall. Brown did not use any urgent language about how devastating **Hurricane Katrina's** effects might be along the Gulf Coast. With a lack of emergency management experience and a complacent attitude, additional people needlessly died, because of this inadequate response. FEMA was stripped of its emergency powers shortly after, but the horror of **Hurricane Katrina** still has many asking, "how could this have happened and could it occur again?"

Our coastline will always be battered by **hurricanes**. History has taught us some painful lessons, and **Hurricane Katrina** is a reminder that Mother Nature can deal us a powerful blow, when we least expect it. We are now in an active cycle of **hurricane** development. The 2005 Atlantic **hurricane** season was the busiest

on record, and it appears we all may need to buckle down for the long haul. Preparation is the key, but remembering this **hurricane** season, may be a sobering wake up call for people to evacuate the next time a tropical cyclone of any magnitude decides to pay us a visit.