

**EPA** United States Environmental Protection Agency  
2011 Community Involvement Training Conference  
Community Involvement in the 21st Century: Embracing Diversity,  
Expanding Engagement, Utilizing Technology

## Welcome to the online broadcast!

Community Involvement Plan of the Year-  
Enhanced Engagement through  
Innovation  
July 19, 2011 10:00 am  
David Cooper and Yolanda Anita Sanchez



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## Feedback

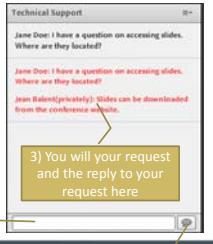
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## Thank you!

Let's begin today's session!

U.S. EPA  
COMMUNITY  
INVOLVEMENT  
CONFERENCE  
July 19 22, 2011  
Crystal City, Virginia

The Importance of  
Understanding Communities  
In Disaster  
Response and Recovery

*Presented by*  
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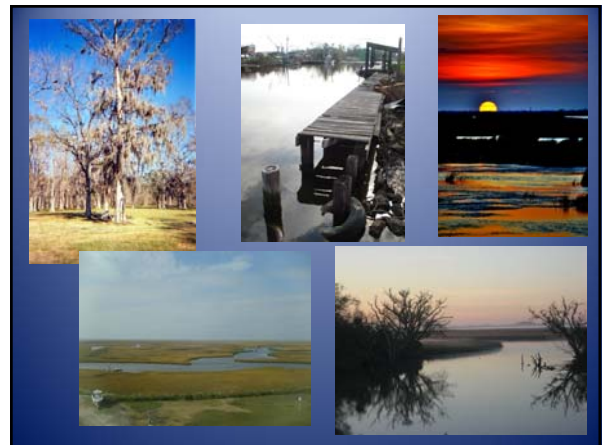
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Coastal Louisiana is unique !



Our landscape is stunning !



Our wildlife is unusual !





Our people are diverse !



Our Celebrations are Varied !



Our houses are different !



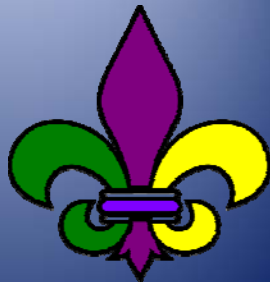
And have been for centuries !



Our food is delicious !



Our Symbols Are Famous !





Even our signs are distinctive !



Our issues are tragic !

- Coastal Land Loss
  - Land Subsidence
  - Salt Water Intrusion
  - Land erosion
  - Sea level rise
- Increased number and strength of storms
- Industrial pollution and disasters

## Coastal Land Loss



Wine Island sinking off coast of LA



Dead Cypress Swamp in Chauvin, Louisiana  
Caused by Salt Water Intrusion



Land Subsidence:  
•Removal of fuels from under delta  
•Lack of re sedimentation



Indiscriminate dredging of  
oil and gas pipelines  
through fragile wetlands



## Increased number and strength of Storms



## Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana



## 2005 Impacts

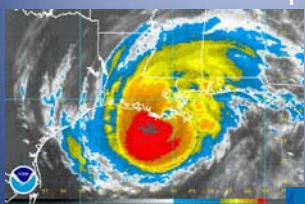


Hurricane Katrina

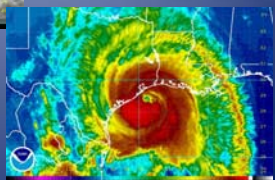


Hurricane Rita

## 2008 Impacts



Hurricane Gustav



Hurricane Ike

## 2010 Impact

BP Deepwater Horizon  
Explosion and Gusher

The Symbol of Louisiana

So how important is it to  
understand a community when  
responding to a disaster?

**IT IS CRITICAL !**

When responders don't understand the  
community in which they are working,  
services and resources are delayed or non  
existent, which can lead to:

- People not getting out of harm's way
- People being harmed or killed
- People not being able to recover adequately
- Build up of distrust



### Important Community Aspects

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ❖ Infrastructure      | ❖ Government          |
| ❖ Natural Environment | ❖ Food                |
| ❖ Culture             | ❖ Special Populations |
| ❖ Ethnic Groups       | ❖ Commerce            |
| ❖ Language            | ❖ Disaster Experience |
| ❖ Education           | ❖ Disaster Planning   |
| ❖ Wealth              |                       |

### Infrastructure

#### WATER

- Clean and adequate drinking water
- Safe and effective water lines
- Potable Water Supplies
- Distribution Systems and Plans
- Clean and usable water bodies
- Removing and recovering from flood waters

### ELECTRICITY / POWER

- Emergency services power
- Grid planning / community awareness
- Critical facilities
- Safety for community
- Worker training
- Before and after public preparedness
- Inside and out

### Sewer / Waste Water

- Contamination by flood waters
- Communication with public / education
- Public and private toilet backups
- Wastewater Treatment Facilities
- Private sewer /septic systems impaired or re-located by flood waters
- Bacterial growth / hypoxia



### Critical Facilities

- Buildings and staff
- Local Government
- Law Enforcement
- Fire Departments
- Communications
- Emergency Operations
- Shelters
- Hospitals
- Critical Records Storage
- Financial Institutions
- Food Outlets

### Transportation

- Multiple adequate evacuation routes
- Evacuation planning and education
- Stability and capacity of roads and bridges
- Traffic management and enforcement
- Marked hazard areas
- Public transportation availability and planning
- Funding
- Special Needs Populations

### The Natural Environment Affects...

- How people live
- Water issues
- Electricity issues
- Sewer issues
- Health issues
- Safety issues
- Transportation issues
- Everything...

### “Culture” defines how a population lives...their way of life.

- Much harm is created by responders who do not understand the major cultures of a community
- Lack of understanding impairs the responders ability to immerse into the community for the most effective impacts.
- Using local responders if possible (or trained responders in the alternative) can prevent misunderstandings that impair effectiveness.

### Ethnic Groups

- Who are the people of a community?
- What is their history?
- How long have they been in this community?
- What are their traditions?
- What are their social systems?
- What are the big no no's for each group?
- How does this group best respond to information?

### Language is tricky

- Different languages prevail in different communities
- Learn what are the common languages in a community BEFORE responding to a situation
- There are many dialects of the same language
- It is best to use local translators
- Barriers are created by language skills (or lack thereof)
- Lack of knowledge creates lack of preparation, which creates harm

### A person's educational level will affect their ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster.

- All disaster documents for public consumption should be written for a reading level of a second grader or below.
- Educational levels impact how people perceive dangers to themselves or others.
- Educational levels impact people's abilities to adapt to other cultures in times of disaster.

### Wealth Affects...

- An individual's or family's ability to prepare for, respond to, or recover from a disaster; i.e.,
  - Evacuate
  - Secure food, shelter, supplies, transportation...
  - Clean up
  - Rebuild or rehabilitate
  - Mitigate for future disasters

### Community Wealth Affects

- A community's ability to prepare for, respond to, or recover from a disaster; i.e.,
  - Emergency planning
  - Providing for community members & responders
    - Food; water; shelter; commodities; transportation; etc
  - Rebuilding or restoring infrastructure
  - Personnel costs
  - Mitigation measures for future disasters

### Government

- How does the local government work?
- Who are the people who can get things done?
- How does the local government work with state government? With national government?
- What are the goals and objectives of the impacted governmental agencies?
- Who does what?
- How can they be contacted?
- Who plays games? What games?

### Food

"This meal can feed three regular people or one Cajun."

- What are the traditional foods of the area?
- What are their eating habits?
- What foods are needed for special populations?
  - Seniors, infants, toddlers, allergies, diseases, vegans, pets, etc.
- Who provides food? From where? How?

### Special Populations

- Elderly
- Physical Illnesses / Diseases
- Mental Illnesses / Diseases
- Addictions
- Infants
- Toddlers
- Allergies
- Disabilities
- Pets

## Commerce

- Individual business planning
- Business cooperatives or networks
- COOP (Continuum of Operations Plan)
- Utilities provisions
- Financial
- Transportation planning (people, goods)
- Access / Ingress Egress

## Disaster Planning

- COOP (Continuum of Operations Plan)
- Family Emergency Plans
  - Who
  - What
  - When
  - Where
  - How
- "Knowledge is Power"

## Disaster Experience

- Previous disaster experience can lead to:
  - Fear, anxiety, stress
  - Preparedness, knowledge, power
- Responders should be aware of a community's previous disaster experience in order to better meet the needs of that community in the current disaster

The key to successful disaster response is knowledge of the community, planning and training, and the ability to adapt quickly to ever changing dynamics.



**Bayou History Center, Inc.**  
Studying Yesterday To Understand Today and Improve Tomorrow

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