



# The Times-Picayune

50 CENTS 169th year No. 245

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2005

HURRICANE EDITION

## DAY 24 DEVELOPMENTS

The official death toll in metropolitan New Orleans: **799**

Three hospitals in the New Orleans area that stayed open appeal to Congress and the Bush administration for financial aid. **See A-2**

The House approves \$6.1 billion in tax breaks to help families recover. **See A-3**

The White House says it has learned its lessons from Katrina and will be ready when Hurricane Rita makes landfall. **See A-4**

Samples from Lake Pontchartrain show the water seems healthy, officials say. **See A-5**

Thousands of city residents are about to start over in Dallas, a city that was grappling with acute poverty and rampant crime before Hurricane Katrina. **See A-11**



Few, if any, businesses in Slidell's Olde Towne survived intact. **See B-1**

Orleans Levee Board loses its revenue sources. **See Metro**



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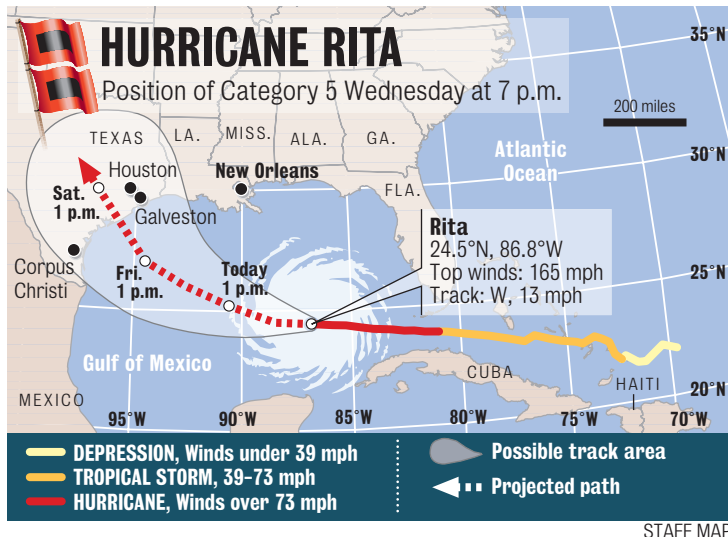
# CATEGORY 5 RITA HAS N.O. NERVOUS

## HURRICANE SCATTERS EVACUEES IN TEXAS; RAIN, SURGE COULD REACH CRESCENT CITY



AP PHOTO

Galveston Independent School District buses carry evacuees north on Interstate 45 out of the Texas city Wednesday. If Hurricane Rita hits Galveston, about 40 miles southeast of Houston, it will smash a city where a 1900 hurricane killed about 8,000 people in one of the biggest natural disasters in U.S. history.



STAFF MAP

By John Pope  
Staff writer

With Hurricane Rita barreling toward the Texas coast Wednesday as a Category 5 hurricane, Louisiana officials struggled to prepare citizens and levees for the perilous possibility that a last-minute change of direction could put the battered state at risk of even more destruction.

"Once the storm gets in the Gulf of Mexico, there's no telling where it's going to go," New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin said, adding that he should have a better indication today of Rita's course.

Despite the uncertainty about

where Rita might strike, police and National Guard officers urged New Orleanians to leave town as soon as possible. This group included residents exiled by Hurricane Katrina who had returned to the city this week to try to resume their lives.

"The goal is to stay in New Orleans, but with Rita out there, I don't know," said Alex Curtis, who, with his parents, runs the Brass Menagerie on Magazine Street.

Even if Rita follows its expected route and strikes Galveston, Texas, rain and storm surges are possible in New Orleans, which

See RITA, A-9

## Bridge exposes racial divide

*Gretna police stand by decision to block evacuees*

By Matthew Brown  
West Bank bureau

When the Superdome and the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center deteriorated into anarchy and food and water ran short, many who tried to escape the flooded streets of New Orleans found their paths blocked.

Gretna police fired shots over the heads of evacuees streaming across the Crescent City Connection, as bullhorns blared for them to go back to New Orleans.

In Plaquemines Parish, dozens of sheriff's deputies raised shotguns and pistols to turn back a convoy of school buses attempting to take storm victims to safety at the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse.

And in Westwego, arriving evacuees had two choices: Leave immediately, or go to an overcrowded shelter with few supplies where armed guards accompanied by a police dog prevented anyone from leaving.

The confrontations occurred largely along racial lines: African-American residents of poor sections of New Orleans facing off against majority white law enforcement agencies.

Elected law enforcement officials remain unapologetic over their response and say they would take the same steps if the city flooded again.

See GREтна, A-6

## Nagin foresees a much smaller city

By Robert Travis Scott  
Capital bureau

BATON ROUGE — Mayor Ray Nagin said Wednesday he foresees the New Orleans of the near future as a city of about 250,000 people, about half its population before Hurricane Katrina devastated the city in late August.

As Nagin addressed questions from elected officials and the public at a meeting in the state Capitol, he defended his policies to allow citizens limited access to re-enter the city in the short term and to rebuild New Orleans in the long term.

"We are going to lose a significant portion of our population" in the next 12 to 18 months, he said, partly because the city's infrastructure will not be able to handle more. After establishing a population of about a quarter of a million, "then we'll build from there," Nagin said.

"Let's start to dream about where we can be post-Katrina," he said.

See NAGIN, A-7

## Plenty customers, few workers vex East Jeff eateries

*Key obstacle: lack of employee housing*

By Bob Ross  
East Jefferson bureau

At Houston's restaurant in Metairie, workers completed repairs to the Katrina-damaged floor Wednesday morning while a cable technician rewired a television set near the bar. Darren

Newell, service manager for the usually crowded restaurant, said Houston's has the OK from state health officials and enough supplies on hand.

"I could open today, to be honest," he said.

The problem for Houston's these days, and for many restaurants and other companies throughout East Jefferson, is finding enough workers to staff the businesses. With Jefferson Parish stirring to life and owners and managers pushing to reopen

quickly, some lower-paid employees — the dishwashers, wait staff, clerks and manual laborers — remain dispersed across the country by the Aug. 29 storm, leaving these businesses in a bind.

"Our people are in Houston, Atlanta, Dallas and elsewhere, and they don't have places to live here," Houston's kitchen manager Dan Maloney said. Some tell him they can't return without a home for themselves and their families.

For example, the Houston's location on Veterans Memorial Boulevard normally has about 35 people working each of the two daily shifts, for a total of at least 70 people, plus managers. Newell and Maloney said only about 42 employees have returned.

And Houston's won't open until it has enough employees and can offer a full menu, they said. Newell said he and Maloney

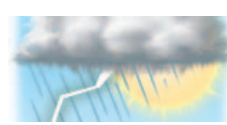
See WORKERS, A-8

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### INSIDE

Comics C-2 Metro B Editorial B-8 Money B-7 Living C Sports C-5



THUNDERSTORM HIGH 90 LOW 80

