

# The Times-Picayune



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HURRICANE EDITION

## Hastily built dams remain in Jeff roads

*Some officials want them kept in place for now*

By Sheila Grissett  
East Jefferson bureau

Soon after Hurricane Katrina ripped a hole in the 17th Street Canal's eastern wall and began flooding New Orleans, the water poured back west across the Jefferson Parish line into Old Metairie and Old Jefferson. Jefferson Parish officials and Louisiana National Guard crews rushed to erect rock dams at four locations, in hopes of stemming the tide before it inundated even more homes and streets on their side of the parish line.

Almost a month later, the dams remained largely intact, blocking most traffic on four roads, including a pair of six-lane thoroughfares: Airline Drive and Jefferson Highway.

But that's likely to change soon, perhaps by the weekend.

See AIRLINE, A-16

## Ex-FEMA chief pins blame on La.

*Late evacuation order led to mess, he tells Congress*

By Bruce Alpert  
Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — The former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency took responsibility Tuesday for mistakes in responding to Hurricane Katrina, but he cast most of the blame on a "dysfunctional" emergency management team in Louisiana and New Orleans, cuts in his agency's budget and a "hysterical" news media that he said exaggerated problems.

Michael Brown told a special House investigatory committee that a good deal of the problems in New

See BROWN, A-19

# COMPASS RESIGNS

Abrupt departure comes as NOPD Katrina response is questioned



AP PHOTO

New Orleans Police Superintendent Eddie Compass, right, announces his retirement at a news conference with Mayor Ray Nagin at the Sheraton Hotel. Neither Compass nor Nagin provided any background or explanation as to why the chief chose this moment, when New Orleans is enduring its greatest crisis, to depart.

By James Varney and Michael Perlstein  
Staff writers

**3**  
Number of years as police chief

**26**  
Number of years on the force

**249**  
N.O. police officers who left their posts without permission

**1,700**  
Number of officers on the force

New Orleans Police Superintendent Eddie Compass, whose emotional media appearances since Hurricane Katrina made him one of the city's most recognizable figures nationwide, abruptly announced his retirement Tuesday.

The stunning departure of the city's top cop roiled New Orleans leaders, and raised questions of whether Mayor Ray Nagin forced Compass from his job. Earlier this month, on Sept. 9, Compass said, "I want to be police chief here as long as I can and as long as Mayor Nagin will have me."

Compass made the announcement at an afternoon news conference. Neither Compass nor Nagin provided any background or explanation as to why the chief chose this moment, when New Orleans is enduring its greatest crisis, to depart. Nagin said, when asked, that he did not ask for

Compass' resignation.

Although Compass' performance during Katrina has brought forth some criticism, his three-and-a-half year tenure as superintendent had its rocky moments before Katrina, most notably as the city witnessed a resurgence in its infamously high murder rate. Nagin picked him as chief, but he and Compass were not particularly close, according to people who know both men.

Compass appeared at the news conference at the Sheraton Hotel, flanked by Nagin, his three assistant superintendents and a handful of commanders and bodyguards, to announce his retirement. Deputy Superintendent Warren Riley has been announced as interim chief.

"Since I was a little boy, my whole life, I wanted to be the superintendent of police," Compass said Tuesday, appearing to fight back tears. "In the life of every leader the time comes to reflect on his life, and I'm

See COMPASS, A-14

### IN HIS WORDS

N.O. Police Superintendent Eddie Compass was emotional and hyperbolic in the days after Katrina; many comments were unsubstantiated.

"We had little babies in there (in the Convention Center), little babies getting raped. ... You know how frustrating it is to be the chief of police knowing inside these things are being done and you don't have enough manpower to go in there?"

Sept. 6 interview with Oprah Winfrey

"We have individuals who are getting raped, we have individuals who are getting beaten. ... Tourists are walking in that direction, and they are getting preyed upon."

Sept. 1 on reports of violence at the Convention Center

"Those cowards, those individuals that left us hanging, they will pay."

Sept. 8 on 'Nightline' on desertions by police

"The criminal element had raided every gun store in the city. We were fighting in conditions where we couldn't fire back because they were firing around civilians. So we had to physically take guns from these individuals with our hands."

Sept. 8 interview on Canada's CTV

"I'm still standin' baby! I'm the ultimate warrior! ... I'm going to be the last person to leave the battlefield!"

Sept. 13, in the St. Petersburg Times

Candy may be dandy, and liquor may be quicker, but on Monday, when the juice again began flowing in the French Quarter, it was the power that re-energized happy hour

Lance Lewis sips a cold beer Monday in Molly's at the Market. The Decatur Street bar has been open ever since Hurricane Katrina passed through, but on Monday, patrons saw a few cherished luxuries return, including lights and the jukebox.



STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS GRANGER

## BOURBON BUZZ

By Bruce Hamilton  
Staff writer

For the first time since Katrina, the streets of the French Quarter didn't go dark Monday as night fell.

Streetlamps and neon signs glowed, loud bars stayed open past midnight, and carousing patrons cheered the LSU Tigers on television. Local eccentrics were back in their ele-

ment. And there were tourists, even if most of them were relief workers or law enforcement personnel.

What was strangest about the scene was that it was so strangely normal. But in the wake of two hurricanes, restoration of electricity in the city's oldest and most cherished neighborhood was like finding a pulse on a patient who was thought to have flat-lined.

"When the power came on, I

said, 'Yea!'" said Bonnibel Byars, a part-time Ursulines Street resident who had just returned from her other home in Minnesota. She was impressed by the activity in the Quarter, the lodestone of New Orleans' tourism industry.

"I was skeptical," she said, having expected things to be "kind of desolate."

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PARTLY SUNNY  
HIGH 91 LOW 74

