

KENYON

EMERGENCY SERVICES

CASE STUDY

Response to Hurricane Katrina

BACKGROUND

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina presented catastrophic and prolonged-lasting effects in New Orleans and surrounding areas. It was estimated that approximately 1 million people had fled the city and surrounding areas by the time Katrina came ashore, with a further 25 to 30 thousand remaining. The extensive flooding stranded many of those that chose to stay behind. People were trapped on rooftops, inside houses and in attics.

There was no clean water or electricity in the city, the communication infrastructure was severely affected, and most major roads were damaged.

Kenyon responded to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) request for assistance and immediately deployed its temporary mortuary and deceased recovery operations.

CHALLENGES

Coordination between several respective response agencies was not at an optimum level, resulting in a disconnect to the free flow of the operation response.

Working conditions were oppressive with very high humidity, so dehydration was an issue. Also, the potential for spreading disease-related contaminated drinking water and food supplies in the city was high. The physical working conditions

associated with the flooding and using boats for access presented unique challenges.

The body recovery process didn't occur until the 8th of September, a considerable delay after the incident. FEMA and the American Defence Force took lead roles in the emergency response operation, and the FEMA group DMORT took responsibility for the identification.



SOLUTIONS

Due to the lack of facilities in New Orleans, Kenyon managed operations from its Incident Management Center in Baton Rouge.

During the search, we worked alongside the Louisiana Air National Guard, local, state and federal police officers, and other state law enforcement teams. We were responsible for initiating deceased search and recovery operations of local hospitals and nursing homes, responding to individual calls, reports of remains from searching military units, and secondary searches of homes.

Kenyon also provided mobile mortuaries and associated equipment to support recovery, including vehicles, boats, and personal protective equipment.

Under the direction of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, we were responsible for setting up and staffing a Family Assistance Center. In addition, creating a database to assist incident management and the identification of the deceased, collecting antemortem information from family members regarding missing persons.



RESULTS

Kenyon provided a tailored disaster response service to the Katrina response operation and recovered 800 deceased persons. The team implemented and encouraged open communication throughout the process with other response groups.

Kenyon conducted thorough risk assessments on all operations. All staff were issued with appropriate personal protective equipment during the process, and ample supplies of bottled water were always available to ensure hydration.

The subsequent government enquires into the Katrina response operation have set the framework to mitigate the challenges encountered in the early stages of the process concerning roles and responsibilities for future crises.

If you would like to know more about Kenyon Emergency Services, visit kenyoninternational.com or contact kenyon@kenyoninternational.com

