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HURRICANE KATRINA | AFTER THE STORM

SHEER DEVASTATION

Thousands likely dead in New Orleans

Mayor says everybody must leave



AP/DAVE MARTIN

Sheila Dixon of New Orleans weeps as she clutches her 18-month-old daughter, Emily. They were sitting on the side of Interstate 10 Wednesday after being airlifted out of flood-besieged New Orleans.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Refugees evacuated. Officials begin to evacuate at least 25,000 of Hurricane Katrina's refugees, most of them at the New Orleans Superdome. They are being sent to the Astrodome in Houston.

Medical response. Health and Human Services Department declares a public health emergency, and sends in medical supplies, hospital beds and public health officers.

Looters on loose. Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco asks the White House to send more people to help with evacuations and rescues, freeing up National Guard members to stop out-of-control looters.

Guard dispatched. National Guard troops from at least eight states are sent for law enforcement support, communications, medical help, debris removal and other assistance. About 11,000 Guard members are now deployed in the region.

Gas prices spike. Gasoline prices surge above \$3 a gallon in many parts of the country and shortages crop up in some areas as supply disruptions from Katrina widen.

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AP/ROB CARR

Rhonda Braden walks through the destruction in her childhood neighborhood Wednesday in Long Beach, Miss. Braden was there checking on her father's house. It sustained major water damage from Hurricane Katrina.

BAYOU LA BATRE

Town's shrimpers may be sunk

By KIM CHANDLER
News staff writer

BAYOU LA BATRE — Trucks hauled away millions of dollars worth of rotting shrimp Wednesday from the Sea Pearl processing plant that sits by the docks of Bayou La Batre.

Hurricane Katrina put 6 feet of water into the plant, destroying machinery and wiping out 70 jobs that families had relied on.

"The seafood plants took a huge hit. All of us are out of business," owner Greg Ladnier said.

Surveying the wreckage of the business his father began with one oyster boat, Ladnier estimated it would be four months before he could reopen and his employees could return to work.

"I can't pay my workers right now. There's going to be a lot of people out of work," he said.

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By ADAM NOSSITER
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS

With thousands feared drowned in what could be America's deadliest natural disaster in a century, New Orleans' leaders all but surrendered the streets to floodwaters Wednesday and began turning out the lights on the ruined city — perhaps for months.

Mayor Ray Nagin called for an all-out evacuation of the city's remaining residents. Asked how many people died, he said: "Minimum, hundreds. Most likely, thousands."

With most of the city underwater, Army engineers struggled to plug New Orleans' breached levees with giant sandbags and concrete barriers, and authorities drew up plans to clear out the tens of thousands of remaining people and to practically abandon the city below sea level. Most of the evacuees — including thousands now suffering in the hot and muggy Superdome — will be moved to the Astrodome in Houston, 350 miles away.

There will be a "total evacuation of the city. We have to. The city will not be functional for two or three months," Nagin said. And he said people

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NEW ORLEANS

Police halt rescues to stop city's looters

By KEVIN MCGILL
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Mayor Ray Nagin ordered 1,500 police officers to leave their search-and-rescue mission Wednesday night and return to the streets to stop looting that has turned increasingly hostile as the city plunges deeper into chaos.

"They are starting to get closer to heavily populated areas — hotels, hospitals — and we're going to stop it right now," Nagin said.

The number of officers called off the search-and-rescue mission amounts to virtually the entire police force in New Orleans.

Amid the turmoil Wednesday, thieves commandeered a forklift and used it to push up the storm shutters and break the glass of a pharmacy. The crowd stormed the store, carrying out so much ice, water and food that it dropped from their

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Stampede kills hundreds

Panic breaks out among Shiite pilgrims on Iraqi bridge

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
The Washington Post

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Rumors of a suicide bomber sowed panic among thousands of Shiite Muslim pilgrims on a bridge over the Tigris River on Wednesday, triggering a stampede in which many jumped into the turbid

river or fell to their deaths below on sidewalks and a children's playground.

At least 637 people died, said Col. Adnan Abdul Rahman, an Interior Ministry spokesman. Other estimates were much higher, although an accurate count was not available because

the bodies of victims were taken to many hospitals, mosques and private homes.

The disaster took more lives than any other single incident in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003. Tensions had been high among the pilgrims, who were marching to Baghdad's Kadhimiya shrine, because of an

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AP

A man watches from the bridge over the Tigris River as people rush to the riverbanks Wednesday to search for survivors in Baghdad.

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WEATHER
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