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Quick change

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LIFE & ARTS

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SPORTS

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From A to J, the first 50 in our list of 100 places to hear live music here.



Austin American-Statesman

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Thursday, September 1, 2005

Fleeing their ruined city

Gas prices jump: Are suppliers gouging?

By Claudia Grisales
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

As expected, gasoline prices in Central Texas and across the country spiked over the past two days as the effects of Hurricane Katrina knocking out one third of the nation's oil-refining capacity took hold.

But questions are being raised as to whether some gas station owners are taking advantage of the situation.

In Central Texas, some stations reported overnight price jumps of 20 cents or more, reaching \$2.79 and beyond for a gallon of regular grade gasoline.

Some had even more dramatic price increases. According to AustinGasPrices.com, several are charging \$2.89 a gallon. One station in East Austin was charging \$2.45 Tuesday night; by Wednesday morning, the price was \$2.89.

In other parts of the state,

See **FUEL**, A11

Mississippi search for living turns up the dead

By Abby Goodnough
and Kate Zernike
THE NEW YORK TIMES

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss. — Dave Bernzweig saw them as soon as he peered inside the small brick house: two more lost souls, wedged among the soaked ruins of their belongings. He recorded the location of the bodies, between the front door and the flowered couch, then moved across the street, where another victim of Hurricane Katrina lay.

Bernzweig and his colleagues from Ohio Task Force One, a division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency hunting for storm survivors, have punishing work ahead of them. In this area of coastal Mississippi lashed hard when the eye of Katrina passed just to the west, they are looking for the

See **MISSISSIPPI**, A11



Matt Rourke photos AMERICAN-STATESMAN

They're in a safer place, but their journey isn't over. After being rescued in New Orleans, evacuees waited at a camp Wednesday in

nearby Metairie, La., for transport to hospitals or shelters. Some said they don't care where they go, as long as it's away from the danger.

Hope floats for folks who got out

Desperation to reach safety is common thread for evacuees

By Tony Plohetski
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

METAIRIE, La. — The floodwaters in the lower level of Rachel Abld-Khaliq's home in eastern New Orleans stood at 9 feet Wednesday morning, rising a few inches with each passing hour.

Her 30-year-old son, who had spent two days waving a white towel from a second-story window each time he heard a helicopter, decided to try something else to save his family.

The father of two children, ages 2 and 7 months, both of whom were in the house, found a red Magic Marker and a white blanket. He made a rooftop sign: "Help! Babies! Save us!"

By late afternoon, Abld-Khaliq's family — her son, daughter, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren — were on higher ground in a Hurricane

Katrina refugee camp in Metairie. A National Guard helicopter had plucked them from the roof.

As they flew to safety, family members said they looked down to see screaming neighbors who also had escaped rising water by climbing on their roofs. They also saw what appeared to be bodies bobbing below.

"If we didn't get out, we were going to die," said Abld-Khaliq, a retired real estate agent. "We were so scared. The water just kept filling up more and more."

Thousands of people saved by helicopters and boats Wednesday traded similar stories of horror and rescue at the camp near Interstate 10 and Causeway Boulevard in western suburban New Orleans.

Dozens of helicopters, including those from the Texas National Guard in Austin, ferried people throughout the day, depositing them in parking lots and grassy areas several hundred feet from the camp.

Hurricane victims said they

See **HOPE**, A10

New Orleans is emptying; return may be months away

By Adam Nossiter
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 shutting down the ruined city — perhaps for months.

Looting spiraled so out of control that Mayor Ray Nagin ordered virtually the entire police force to abandon search-and-rescue efforts and focus on the brazen packs of thieves who have turned increasingly hostile.

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 practically abandon the below-sea-level city.

"The city will not be functional for two or three months," Nagin said.

Meanwhile, the Army Corps of Engineers said late Wednesday that draining the billions of gallons of water that has inundated New Orleans could take three to six months, a substantially longer time than many experts have expected.

The estimate, moreover, depends on favorable weather conditions. Additional storms,

See **FLEE**, A7

More coverage

Disaster experts say federal government wasn't ready for Katrina. **A10.**

Texas opens doors to Katrina's victims. **A13.**

Mississippi lawmakers could consider allowing land-based casinos. **C6.**

New Orleans Saints might play home games in San Antonio, Houston or Baton Rouge. **D1.**

On statesman.com: View a slideshow of the devastation and recovery as well as a map of Katrina's path.

IN METRO & STATE



Baby sitter found guilty

Woman accused of killing boy may get life in prison. **B1**

IN BUSINESS

Nonstop to New York

Delta adds direct flight from Austin to JFK Airport. **C1**

COMING FRIDAY

'Junebug'

Rich film explores how a new in-law relates to a Southern family. **Life & Movies**

WEATHER

Mostly sunny and hot.
High: 100 Low: 74
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Crush kills hundreds of Iraqi pilgrims



Samir Mizban ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pilgrims cross the bridge leading to the Shiite shrine in the Baghdad neighborhood of Kazimiyah on Wednesday.

Fear of attack sparks fatal stampede amid religious procession

By Larry Kaplow
INTERNATIONAL STAFF

BAGHDAD, Iraq — In a tragedy that shocked even this city wearily accustomed to death, about 800 Shiite Muslim pilgrims died Wednesday in a stampede on a Tigris River bridge after panic swept the crowd, possibly amid rumors that a suicide bomber was in their midst.

It was the worst loss of life in a single incident in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

En route to a nearby shrine,

the worshippers, including many women and children, were crushed and asphyxiated. Others perished after falling or flinging themselves 40 feet down into the murky water, where many drowned.

An eyewitness said he heard screams for nearly half an hour from the crowd that collapsed upon itself on the bridge.

Later, bodies were removed and laid out on median strips, in hospital halls and outside morgues for wailing relatives to identify.

Piles of discarded shoes, clothes, purses and lunch tins stretched at least 50 yards on the bridge.

Reflecting the chaos, casualty See **IRAQ**, A6