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"This is a desperate SOS."

— Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans

STATE OF CHAOS

Tired, hungry New Orleans erupts with fights, gunfire

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Storm victims were raped and beaten, fights and fires broke out, corpses lay out in the open, and rescue helicopters and law enforcement officers were shot at as flooded-out New Orleans descended into anarchy Thursday. "This is a desperate SOS," the mayor said.

Anger mounted across the ruined city, with thousands of storm victims increasingly hungry, desperate and tired of waiting for buses to take them out.

"We are out here like pure animals. We don't have help," the Rev. Isaac Clark, 68, said outside the New Orleans Convention Center, where corpses lay in the open and he and other evacuees complained they were dropped off and given nothing — no food, no water, no medicine.

About 15,000 to 20,000 people who had taken shelter at the convention center to await buses grew increasingly hostile. Police Chief Eddie Compass said he sent in 88 officers to quell the situation at the building, but they were quickly beaten back by an angry mob.

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

In hopes of defusing the unrest at the convention center, Mayor Ray Nagin gave the refugees permission to march across a bridge to the city's unflooded west bank for whatever relief they could find. But the bedlam at the convention center appeared to make leaving difficult.

A military helicopter tried to land at the convention center several times to drop off food and water. But the rushing crowd forced the choppers to back off. Troopers then tossed the supplies to the crowd from 10 feet off the ground and flew away.

National Guardsmen poured in to help restore order and put a stop to the looting, carjackings and gunfire that have gripped New Orleans in the days since Hurricane Katrina plunged much of the city under water.

In a statement to CNN, Nagin said: "This is a desperate SOS. Right now we are out of resources at the convention center and don't anticipate enough buses. We need buses. Currently the convention center is unsanitary and unsafe, and we're running out of supplies."

KATRINA: Back Page



Associated Press photos

A SWAT team drives past flood victims waiting Thursday at the New Orleans Convention Center. Officials called for a mandatory evacuation of the city, but many residents remained and had to be rescued from flooded homes and hotels.

Congress to cut check for \$10B; majority of aid will go to FEMA

By Dave Roepke
droepke@forumcomm.com

Congress is rushing to provide \$10.5 billion in relief to Gulf Coast victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The Senate approved the measure Thursday night, and the House will convene at noon today to speed the measure to President Bush's desk.

Congressional officials said \$10 billion in relief aid would go to FEMA, the government's first-line defender in case of natural

disasters. The remainder is ticketed for the Pentagon, which has dispatched ships and other assistance to aid in the relief effort.

A skeleton crew of Senate leaders was all that was required to speed the measure through by voice vote after Bush informed top Republicans and Democrats that reserves of relief funds could be exhausted by Congress' scheduled return from a five-week vacation on Tuesday.

CONGRESS: Back Page

Is looting ever OK? Ethicists grapple with disaster dilemma

Associated Press

As New Orleans has descended into chaos, desperate residents have stolen ramen noodles, loaves of bread, cases of soda — basic survival needs in a painfully empty city. Others have taken jewelry, TVs and even guns.

The devastation left behind by Hurricane Katrina has raised difficult questions of ethics: When, if ever, is looting OK? When is it acceptable to break the law — and what happens when law itself breaks down?

In New Orleans on Thursday, Monica Laguard sobbed almost uncontrollably as she placed items she had taken from a store's shelves into plastic garbage bags to take them to her shelter in a nearby school.

She was taking children's clothing and snack foods. She could not find water.

"I've got to get back to my children," she said. "I've got to get back to my children."

Ethicists and social psychologists said in interviews that rules of human behavior —



A woman cries as she waits with other flood victims Thursday at the convention center.

including respect for others' property and for social order itself — dissolve quickly in desperate circumstances like the storm's aftermath.

"Obviously stealing things like TV sets or beer or any items that aren't crucial for survival, that's a nonstarter," said Mark Bernstein, a professor of applied ethics at Purdue University. "There would be no ethicist in the country that would think that's proper behavior."

But he quickly made an analo-

gy: If the only pharmacy nearby were closed, and it had a drug your mother needed to stay alive, breaking into the pharmacy would be the right thing to do.

"If it's truly for survival — and I emphasize that, really for your children or wife — I think you have an obligation to your family that is at least as strong as the respect you have to pay other property owners," he said.

ETHICS: Back Page

Index

Births	B5	Nation/World	A4, C4
Classified	C5-12	Obituaries	B4
Crosswords	B6, C11	Opinion	A11
Lottery numbers	A2	Sports	D1-6
Metro/State	A6-10	Valley R&R	B1-3, B5
Movies	B2	Weather	A2

Today's weather
Details A2



Possibility of riverfront library remains

By Teri Finneman
tfinneman@forumcomm.com

The possibility of a downtown Fargo riverfront library returned Thursday, taking even members of the Library Building Committee by surprise.

The committee met Thursday afternoon expecting to vote on a recommendation that the

City Commission approve building a new library on the site of the current downtown library.

But committee Chairwoman and City Commissioner Linda Coates opened the meeting by suggesting a broader recommendation.

Coates proposed giving the City Commission one site with two possibilities.

The first is what the committee expected — building on the current site and using Civic Center parking space to the east.

The other is to flip flop the plan with the library in the southern part of the parking lot. This would provide a riverfront view.

Coates said she offered the proposal because the City Commission has not

formally discussed its views on riverfront development.

Committee member Mike Seville asked how much money would need to be raised for the riverfront plan.

The proposed \$9.6 million main library on the current site — along with a new \$3 million south branch and a \$160,000

north branch — would leave the city about \$2 million short of what it needs.

A half-cent sales tax, approved by voters last fall for the new libraries, is expected to generate about \$12 million, but \$1.2 million of that has already been set aside for long-term operational costs.

LIBRARY: Page A5



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