



# Abilene Reporter-News

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50 cents

## HURRICANE KATRINA AFTERMATH

# A DYING CITY

Emergency officials advise public not to visit area, ask for cash donations

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25 refugees arrive in Abilene; more expected as other shelters fill

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High gas prices have some calling for price controls, others worry about gouging

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Eric Gay/Associated Press

Terri Jones tries to cool fellow flood victim Dorothy Divic, 89, who was overheated and exhausted Thursday at the Convention Center in New Orleans. Officials called for a mandatory evacuation of the city, but many residents remained in the city and had to be rescued from flooded homes and hotels. Many still seek a way out.

## New Orleans reaches point of complete breakdown

New York Times News Service

NEW ORLEANS — These are the scenes of a dying city: an elderly woman dead in a wheelchair outside the Convention Center; a note on her lap bearing her name.

A horrified family telling tales of pirates commandeering rescue boats at gunpoint. Corpses left rotting in the streets.

Angry crowds chanting for the television cameras, "We're dying!" or simply "Help!"

On the streets of this submerged town, the anxiety and deprivation that

had built up over four days gave way on Thursday to misery, despair and anger as the refugees of Hurricane Katrina waited yet another day for their deliverance.

While the authorities issued progress reports on the evacuation effort and reassured the rest of the nation that help was on the way, the stranded thousands here heard none of it. Left with little or no food, water, medical care or even police protection, they looked out in fear or lashed out in rage at a world that seemed to have forgotten them.

"They're not organized," said Curtis Green, 38, a cook who stood waiting in a

throng of 10,000 outside the Superdome, waiting for buses to take them away from the city. "Nobody has any plans. We're depending upon them for food, water and shelter. Who's in charge?"

Outside the Convention Center, in a once-prosperous section of town, at least a half-dozen corpses lay slumped in lawn chairs or covered with makeshift shrouds. About 15,000 to 20,000 people congregated there, many lamenting that the authorities had directed them there, then left them in the sweltering heat without food, water, medical care or even police protection. A weeping young woman held out her

dehydrated-looking child and pleaded for help.

"This is not about rich people or poor people," she said. "This is about people."

Things got so bad in New Orleans on Thursday that the flooded city's mayor issued a "desperate SOS" and other local officials, describing the security situation as horrific, lambasted the federal government for responding too slowly to the disaster.

Thousands of Hurricane Katrina refugees from the flooded city boarded buses for Houston, but others quickly

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Abilene schools welcome those displaced by hurricane. 5A

### ON THE NET

Share your hurricane stories at our online forum and get up-to-the-minute headlines as stories develop. [www.reporter-news.com](http://www.reporter-news.com)

## Supporters rally for VA Center

They oppose moving Big Spring facility to Midland-Odessa area

By Jerry Reed  
Reporter-News Staff Writer

BIG SPRING — A hometown crowd showed its overwhelming support Thursday for the West Texas Veterans Administration Center to a panel that will determine the center's fate.

The surprise of the day, however, was a letter from Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick of Midland in support of the West Texas VA Center.

One of the options before the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services committee is to build a new hospital in the Midland-Odessa area to provide inpatient medicine, psychiatry and nursing home care. The facility also would provide assisted living-type services. Big Spring would retain outpatient services under the proposal.

Despite his support for economic development in the Midland area, Craddick wrote, "I believe that moving the VA from Big Spring to Midland-Odessa would cripple the Big Spring economy."

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## City recalls 8 families' housing vouchers

Officials say changes at HUD forcing cuts in rent assistance

By Sarah Kleiner  
Reporter-News Staff Writer

The Abilene Housing Authority recalled housing vouchers Thursday given to eight families who had previously been given the go-ahead to search for a place to live.

Also, the authority closed the program's waiting list to new families. The list consists of more than 1,000 families, some of whom have been waiting for up to two years for federal

housing assistance.

The Abilene Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved the cost-cutting measures during a Thursday meeting in order to ensure the department finishes its federal fiscal year on Dec. 31 within its budget. The authority administers a federal program that assists low-income residents by paying all or part of their rent.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently changed the financial structure of the program, causing housing authorities to overspend, said Roberta Thompson, executive director of the Abilene

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OUTSIDE

Partly cloudy.  
Winds: SE 5-10 mph  
High 92  
Low 68  
Full forecast: BIG COUNTRY, 4AA

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