

New Orleans Sinking? Mammoth Katrina Spurs Evacuations

Posted by

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PEJ News - C. L. Cook - The storm Floridians discounted as minor last week has spent the weekend gathering strength over the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane Katrina has now ballooned to an unprecedentedly large and [powerful Catagory 5](#) , with sustained wind speeds nearing 280 kph, and gusts topping 300kph.

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C.L. Cook

PEJ News

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10:50 pdt- [Evacuation orders have been given](#) for more than a million people living in and around New Orleans and a State of Emergency for the entire coastal region of Louisiana has been declared by the federal government. The storm is expected to make landfall near the historic city at approximately 1pm local time tomorrow.

If timing estimates are correct, that would see Katrina hitting the [low-lying city](#) at the peak of high tide. New Orleans Mayor, Ray Nagin has warned the storm surge, massive ocean waves driven by the hurricane, could top 8 metres, overwhelming the network of levees and dykes protecting one of America's most vital seaports.

In an ominous announcement, the Mayor warned of what he termed an [unprecedented threat](#) t o the city saying,

"Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I had better news for you but we are facing a storm that most of us have feared. This is a threat that we've never faced before."

The storm is currently about 350 kilometres offshore, moving landward toward the Mississippi River delta at roughly 20 kph. The National Hurricane Center has issued warnings of destructive winds stretching along the Gulf coast from Florida to Alabama.

The threat of the evacuation of oil and gas rigs in the Gulf is already effecting [record high gasoline prices](#).

Energy producers say oil output from their Gulf operations has been reduced by a third.

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The storm [Floridians dubbed, "Little Andrew"](#) in deference to that disastrous 1992 hurricane, the costliest in U.S. history, has now matched Andrew's Category 5 status and could yet prove a more damaging storm than its namesake.

Chris Cook hosts [Gorilla Radio](#) , a weekly public affairs program, broad/webcast from the University of Victoria, Canada. He also serves as contributing editor to PEJ.org. You can check out the [GR Blog here.](#)