



# The Flooding of New Orleans

▲ The city of New Orleans lies under water following one of the costliest disasters in U.S. history.

- 1 Hurricane Katrina, which struck the U.S. Gulf Coast in August 2005, was one of the costliest natural disasters<sup>1</sup> in U.S. history—both economically and in terms of lives lost. Damage to the city of New Orleans was estimated at more than 22 billion dollars.
- 5 Over one million people were forced out of the city, and nearly 1,500 people lost their lives.

## The Storm Arrives

- A day before Hurricane Katrina passed close to New Orleans, residents were ordered to leave the city. Unfortunately, tens of thousands of people ignored the order or were unable to leave. When Hurricane Katrina hit, water broke through the system of levees and flood walls constructed by government engineers. Many people in low-lying sectors of the city were forced up onto their roofs by the flood water and waited for help to come by boat or helicopter.

## Chaos<sup>2</sup> in the City

- 15 Circumstances soon grew worse. There were not enough police left in the city, so people were not only exposed to dangerous floodwaters but also to widespread crime. “Most of our people were focused on getting people off roofs and out of the water,” said one police officer. “There were not enough people in the city to rescue and distribute food and water to those who needed help.”
- 20 Looting<sup>3</sup> of stores was common. “I’ve looted,” said Matthew, 35. “But only to keep my family and myself alive. They left us here for days without any food or water, like we were just supposed to die. So we had to loot or die.”

<sup>1</sup> A **disaster** is a very bad accident.

<sup>2</sup> **Chaos** is a state of complete disorder and confusion.

<sup>3</sup> **Looting** is stealing from stores or houses during times of great confusion, such as during a war or natural disaster.

## Waiting for Help

25 A borrowed hotel curtain hung over street signs provided shelter for one large extended family. “I was starting to think it was going to be our home forever,” Kenneth, 47, said. “They told us every day that buses were going to take us to shelters.<sup>4</sup> It was just lies and more lies.”

30 People lived without running water or toilets as they waited for help. Dead bodies were left on streets. It was days before the government gained control of the city and the remaining people were taken to safety.



A survivor stands on the remains of his house, completely flattened by Hurricane Katrina. ►



Houses were thrown against the Mississippi levees by the hurricane's power. ►

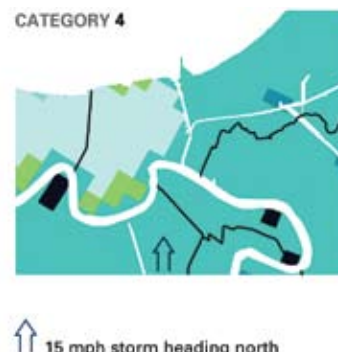
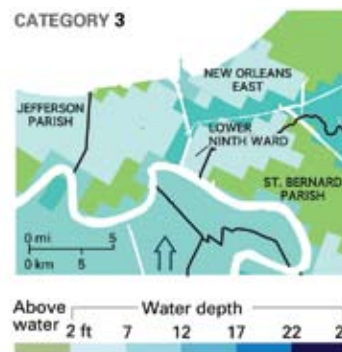
## Should New Orleans Be Rebuilt?

Some experts believe that rebuilding New Orleans isn't a good idea.

40 **Currently**, even a hurricane of average strength could cause flooding in the city again. Global warming is raising sea levels each year, and to make things worse, the land beneath New Orleans is **sinking** at a rate of up to 2.5 centimeters a year. However, despite the risk, two-thirds of the people who left have returned to help rebuild the city they love.

### Storm Warnings ►

A computer model predicts the damage that will occur if another hurricane hits New Orleans. A Category 5 hurricane could easily push storm waters over the levees and flood the entire city; even a Category 3 storm would affect large areas of the city.



<sup>4</sup> A **shelter** is a place where people without homes can stay for a limited period of time.