

DEQ Activities Update
0800 HRS 6SEP05

- Most of DEQ's assessment, response, and recovery work now begins as search and rescue activities tail off, civil order is restored, and access improves.
- DEQ has established and is housing a Unified Command Center where DEQ staff and representatives from EPA, USCG, NOAA, TCEQ, and LOSCO are coordinating emergency response and hazard assessment activities.
- We are currently housing about 25 emergency response personnel for EPA Region 6 and a 19-member "strike team" provided by The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to assist our emergency response activities.
- DEQ has had staff working around the clock manning our desk at EOC since before Katrina came ashore.
- Boats and crews have been assigned to assist in search and rescue. Our crews have rescued almost 500 individuals.
- DEQ personnel are surveying the storm impact area, particularly industrial facilities from planes and boats to identify potential threats to public safety and the environment.
- Ground-based teams from DEQ have been surveying the North Shore areas for environmental hazards and status of waste treatment facilities and are delivering humanitarian assistance (water, ice, MREs) where needed.
- EPA and DEQ have engaged in water sampling inside and outside the New Orleans levees and will be sampling the discharges of floodwaters pumped back to Lake Pontchartrain.
- DEQ is working to establish air quality monitoring at strategic locations in the New Orleans area.

- DEQ staff and State Police visited the major industrial facilities in the New Orleans area yesterday by helicopter to assess their status.
- We have a number of assets conducting aerial reconnaissance and photography including the EPA ASPECT aircraft, HAWK helicopter mounted remote sensing, and additional helicopters provided by EPA. The ASPECT aircraft has remote monitoring capabilities including radiation detectors, air sampling equipment, sophisticated digital aerial photography and GPS capabilities. The HAWK system is capable of remote sensing of gas leaks and hydrocarbon releases.
- DOE will be assisting with a flyover of the affected area using highly sensitive radiation detectors to pinpoint and document locations of radiation sources.
- DEQ is also responding to reports provided by other emergency responders and the public. The telephone number to report environmental hazards to DEQ is (225) 342-1234. A toll-free number for reporting is also available (888) 763-5424.
- We have prepared our laboratory assets for rapid turnaround environmental sample analyses.
- DEQ has issued an emergency declaration providing regulatory relief for emergency response and cleanup activities. It is being updated and regularly posted to DEQ's web site.
- DEQ requested and EPA has granted a fuel waiver providing flexibility for fuel use.
- We are coordinating with the Regional Response Team, LOSCO, and the Coast Guard on coastal oil spill issues.
- We are coordinating with the Corps of Engineers on debris and solid waste cleanup and disposal issues.

- We are coordinating with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission concerning the restart of Waterford III nuclear plant and working with NRC, Homeland Security, and DOE on issues related to sources of radiation.
- DEQ GIS resources are assisting with aerial images, maps and georeferencing of areas of concern. Aerial images and data are being shared with our emergency response partners.
- DEQ is working with EPA to contact various railroad companies for information on contents and status of railcars in the impacted area.
- DEQ is engaged in extensive strategic planning for environmental hazard assessment, response, recovery, and impact assessments.
- Outside of search and rescue and hazard identification, principal concerns right now are containers of large quantities of hazardous materials at the industrial facilities, derailed and submerged rail tank cars, radioactive sources, major oil spills, possible release of toxic materials in explosions and fires, and water quality in the flooded areas.