EPA Response to Hurricane Katrina: An Environmental Assessment of the New Orleans Areas Flooded as a Result of the Hurricane

by

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Abstract
Hurricane Katrina made landfall on Monday, August 29, 2005 as a category 4 hurricane. The storm bought heavy winds and rain to SE Louisiana, breaching several levees and flooding up to 80% of New Orleans and large areas of Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes. Much of the area that was flooded in Hurricane Katrina was re-flooded by storm surge from Hurricane Rita. The flooded areas were declared unwatered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on October 11, 2005. Sediments ranging in depths from less than an inch to several feet were left behind by the floodwaters in areas impacted by the levee overtopping and breaches. However, large portions of the impacted area had little or no sediment deposited.

As local governments and individuals make decisions related to re-entry and habitation, one of the commonly asked questions is the extent to which one should be concerned about environmental contamination of air, land, and water resulting from the hurricanes. The presentation is intended to provide a general assessment of the results of the sampling. The summary does not include environmental data collected at individual sites, such as Murphy Oil or indoor environmental issues associated with re-entry into flooded homes and structures. These issues are addressed separately.

Bio:
George Pavlou is the Director of EPA's Region 2 Emergency and Remedial Response Division. He has a staff of more than 200 people whose responsibilities include the investigations and remediations of hazardous substances, including oil spills. He is also responsible for the Region's preparedness and response actions which will be taken by EPA in the event of a threat or actual occurrence of a major environmental situation or homeland security event within the Region. He is a 1973 graduate of the City College of New York with a Degree in Chemical Engineering and holds a Masters in Business Administration from Baruch College.