Mr. & Mrs. Harry St. Pierre found their perfect cottage only a 1/2 city block from the sandy beaches in Gulfport Mississippi. Life for the St. Pierre’s was all they had dreamed it would be living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. All of their coastal living dreams came crashing down when Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast.

On Friday, August 26, 2005 the National Hurricane Center (NHC) officially shifted the possible track of Katrina from the Florida Panhandle to the Mississippi/Louisiana coast. Many coastal communities throughout Louisiana and Mississippi ordered mandatory evacuations, while other communities ordered voluntary evacuations.

For the St. Pierre’s this would be their fourth evacuation for the 2005 Hurricane Season. They packed up essentials and headed to north Mississippi planning to return home once the storm passed. Little did they know the damage and destruction that Hurricane Katrina would leave in its path after it made landfall on August 29, 2005.

Mr. Pierre was able to return to their home 9 days after landfall to access damages to his home and property. Driving to his home he witnessed the destruction left by Hurricane Katrina knowing he had never witnessed this type of devastation in his life. Many homes on his street had been completely washed away leaving only slabs or steps, others having only studs where exterior and interior walls used to stand. The damages to their home was unimaginable, leaving only about 10 personal items to salvage.

More than 1 million people in Mississippi were affected by Hurricane Katrina. The Gulf Coast of Mississippi suffered near total devastation, with hurricane winds, 28-foot storm surge, and 55-foot sea waved pushing casino barges, boats and debris into towns.

After the storm passed Mr. Pierre received a call from their neighbor down the street. The neighbor informed him that he and his wife should not try to return home and said “you would never be able to live in your house again”, words that Mr. Pierre will never forget. It was in that moment they knew their lives would change forever.

Continued on Page 2...
Items stored at The Port of Gulfport had been displaced throughout many neighborhoods due to flooding. One of those neighborhoods being the St. Pierre’s, where pork bellies and chicken meat laid in the hot summer sun rotten, causing neighborhoods to be quarantined due to contamination.

An estimated 6 feet of water inundated their home. Pre-Katrina the home was not located in a flood-zone and had only seen 1 inch of water during Hurricane Camille in 1969.

The family knew they needed to make other living arrangements so they moved to Pennsylvania with relatives.

Ultimately, the St. Pierre’s home was deemed uninhabitable and was demolished by the City of Gulfport. Before the home was demolished the St. Pierre’s children traveled to the home in hopes to salvage some items for their mother and father. Of the items they were able the salvage was Mrs. Pierre’s wedding dress and other family memorabilia that had sentimental value to the family.

Once their home was demolished the St. Pierre’s decided to purchase an RV, which allowed them to move back to their property and start their recovery process. Within a little over 1 year the family decided that the place they had once called home would never be the same and choose to sell their coastal property. One of the main factors for this decision relied on the extreme rise in insurance rates throughout coastal parishes.

After settling in a couple of different places in Mississippi the Pierre’s decided to move back to Louisiana, where they had started their lives together after they married. The St. Pierre’s adult children lived in Baton Rouge so it only made sense for them to reside near family.

Mr. St. Pierre was able to obtain a job through a contractor hired to assist with the State’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Mr. Pierre proved to be a valuable resource and was hired as a state employee. Today he serves as a State Applicant Liaison (SAL) as part of our Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMG) team within GOHSEP’s Disaster Recovery Division.

Under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), the State of Texas requested sandbagging equipment assistance to assist with the flash flooding and severe weather outbreak from May 14th and continuing. The State of Louisiana, through GOHSEP was able to promptly respond to the request and delivered three (3) Sandbagging Machines to assist in those affected counties throughout Texas. The Louisiana National Guard also provided 2 UH60 Helicopters for search and rescue. Thank you to the Operations Staff for their quick deployment!

2015 Louisiana Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday
Saturday, May 30 & Sunday, May 31

Louisiana Revised Statute 47:305.58 provides for an annual state sales tax holiday on sales of hurricane-preparedness items or supplies made on the last Saturday and Sunday each May. During the two-day annual holiday, tax-free purchases are authorized on the first $1,500 of the sales price of each of the following items:

- portable self-powered light source;
- portable self-powered radio, two-way radio, or weather band radio;
- tarpaulin or other flexible waterproof sheeting;
- any ground anchor system or tie-down kit;
- any gas or diesel fuel tank;
- any package of AAA-cell, AA-cell, C-cell, D-cell, 6-volt, or 9-volt batteries, excluding automobile and boat batteries;
- any cellular phone battery and any cellular phone charger;
- any non-electric food storage cooler;
- any portable generator used to provide light or communications or preserve food in the event of a power outage;
- any “storm shutter device”, as defined in the Act;
- any carbon monoxide detector; and
- any blue ice product.
In November 2014, the Public Assistance Grants Management Section released a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These SOPs standardized our process so each applicant's Reimbursement Requests are reviewed under the same deadlines. Per the SOP, when those deadlines aren't met the appropriate reductions must be made and the Reimbursement Request is processed at the reduced amount. After recent refresher trainings, many Disaster Recovery Specialists (DRSs) from Gail Rhines' Group (consisting of Tina Emerson and William Matthews' Teams) really took the message to heart. On their own initiative, and on their own dime, several DRSs had t-shirts created stating “When in doubt, SOP it out.” We like the humor of the t-shirts, and we love the fact that the DRSs are so on board with the new SOPs!

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Customer Service Overview: Creating a Solid Foundation

Recognizing the criticality of providing excellent customer service to all state agencies, CPTP decided to design a series of courses that provide resources and practice to help develop customer service skills for basic interactions, as well as provide a usable framework for customer relationship management.

This will be the first course in this series, and is designed to give the learner a clearer understanding of what customer service is, why customer service is important, who customer service affects, and the customer’s most basic needs. This course is not only designed to benefit employees who directly work with customers but also to assist in providing learners with best practices for working with other employees in their and other agencies. A downloadable Customer Service Guide e-book that recaps all of the course’s main points is available in the resources attached to the course. This course uses adaptive testing – the test changes with each answer given – within a realistic scenario that requires the learner to take a customer call using skills learned in the course and provide the customer with a positive solution.

This course replaces the existing CPTP Customer Service Overview WBT (CSO). Please direct any questions to the CPTP/Workforce Development Division at (225) 342-8539.

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Pictured from left to right: Gail Rhines, Chad Lee, Winfield LeBlanc, Tina Emerson, Will Matthews, Renetta Varnado, Mica Simpson, Brian Horridge, Dexter Ransom, Alisha Gales, Dana Bruno, Frazier Simmons, and Crystal Golden.
The Coast Guard released its first boating safety app on Saturday, May 16th to kickoff to this year’s National Safe Boating Week.

The app will be available on the Apple and Google Play online stores, and was not designed to replace a boater’s VHF radio, which the Coast Guard strongly recommends all boaters have onboard their vessels. The app is designed to provide additional boating safety resources for mobile device users.

Features include state boating information, a safety equipment checklist, free boating safety check requests, navigation rules, float plans and calling features. When location services are enabled, users can receive the latest weather reports from the closest National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The app also features an emergency assistance button that will call the closest Coast Guard command center if location services are enabled. For more information about the app, please visit http://www.uscg.mil/mobile.

May 25th - Renetta Varnado & Tinaivia Dillon
May 26th - Collins Simoneaux & Brittany Ward
May 27th - Lekeesha Dixon
May 28th - Rachel Schlatre
May 30th—Phyllis Potlongo

Chaston Dixon, Hazard Mitigation Closeout Specialist

Courses of Interest are listed below:
(please check our GOHSEP Training site for all listings)

Response
⇒ LEPC: Emergency Planning + Response Workshop

Louisiana FirstNet
⇒ FN 001: FirstNet Outreach

Preparedness Classes
⇒ School Emergency Management Grant (SMEG) Kickoff Meetings
⇒ Tornado Awareness
⇒ AWR 209: Dealing with the Media
⇒ ICS 300: Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents for Operational First Responders
⇒ AWR: 315: Criminal Intelligence Analysis Essentials
⇒ MGT 341: Disaster Preparedness for Hospitals & Healthcare Organizations within the Community Infrastructure
⇒ Intermediate Social Media Tools and Techniques

Request For Articles
If you would like to include your information/article in future issues of The GOHSEP Focus, please contact:

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allison.hadley@la.gov

Mike Steele (225) 925-3966
mike.steele@la.gov

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