



FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Your Flood Defense System

Press Release

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The Flood Protection Authority-East Now Offers “Virtual Tours” of the Flood Defense System

Visitors will have access to the Surge Barrier and

17th Street Canal Pump Station

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New Orleans, LA – The Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (FPA) partnered with virtual reality (VR) company, Pyxis LLC., to produce a 15-minute virtual tour of the \$4B Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS), which spans three parishes. The new technology allows for viewers to fly over the Lake Borgne Surge Barrier or walk through the 17th St Canal Pump Station with the use of any VR capable headset. The video begins with the history of the HSDRRS system being born out of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and then takes the viewer airborne to the Surge Barrier where in-person tours would normally begin.

Jared Stanton, Founder of Pyxis, said, “Virtual Reality is perfect for projects exactly like this one. We promised the Flood Protection Authority that once we completed, they would be able to provide people across the globe with a tour, and that's exactly what we have done. Now, if you want to stand in front of the massive pumps, all you need is a cardboard headset and a mobile phone.”

The video will also be used as a component of the FPA’s educational initiative which is geared towards the middle school science curriculum. The program has been adopted by the St. Bernard Parish School District since 2017. The FPA is currently seeking new schools to adopt the program as well.

“This project came about before the pandemic as we were looking at new ways to expand our educational outreach,” said Public Information Director Antwan Harris. “As school systems continue to seek out innovative ways to teach students and maneuver around COVID-19 protocols, we have found this virtual tour to be a huge benefit to classrooms around the area.” The FPA purchased 10 MergeEDU softshell headsets to be used during classroom visits.

The VR tour also increases the FPA’s global reach as a member of I-STORM, an international network for storm surge barriers which spans 30 countries. FPA Regional Director Kelli Chandler said, “We have had hundreds of visitors from the I-Storm community visit our structures in the past, but due to the pandemic we had to stop the tours. This gives our partners a completely new and innovative option to visit the structures once again.” The FPA had over 800 visitors from 10 countries to its HSDRRS system in 2019.

The video can be found on the FPA website www.floodauthority.org. Pyxis created custom-branded, cardboard headsets for FPA-East that will be available upon request and availability. Agency partners may request up to 5 cardboard headsets that will be sent as flat mailers once the request is approved. Agencies may request to visit the FPA-East office located at 6920 Franklin Avenue to use the FPA-issued Oculus VR headset onsite. Public tours of the HSDRRS system are closed until further notice. For more information, please contact the FPA Public Information Office at 504-286-3100. To learn more about Pyxis, LLC visit www.pyxisvr.com.

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