



The Flood Protection Authority-East

News of Your Flood Defense System

January 1, 2021



Bayou Bienvenue Vertical Lift Gate located in the IHNC Surge Barrier

Message From President Herbert Miller



2020 - what a year! Is it one to forget, or one to remember?

As I look back on 2020, it would be hard to forget it. COVID-19 dominated the year. The social distancing requirements, coupled with the fear of how an unknown virus would impact us should we become infected, dominated our daily lives. Would we survive it, and if so, what long term side effects would we endure? Could we visit relatives, particularly the elderly? Could we see our children or grandchildren or have dinner with friends? Those were the thoughts shared by our employees, their families, and their friends throughout the year and continuing even now as we head into 2021.

However, what I will most remember about 2020 is the incredible job performance of the FPA staff throughout the year while facing multiple challenges. First there was the shut down in March. Our Executive Staff met the challenge and determined how to continue our critical field operations while providing the needed office assistance for employees who now found themselves working from home. I had numerous conversations with CAO Derek Boese, mostly just listening on my part as he moved forward with plans he and the staff developed. Getting PPE was a crucial component of keeping the operation moving forward. Arranging COVID testing during the early days was critical. Through it all, our staff remained calm and professional. Our IT Department was instrumental in these early days in getting the office staff set up to work from home and continued their efforts by setting up on-line Board of Commissioner meetings during the lockdown. When we were able to return to the offices, the staff made sure that facility was regularly disinfected and that proper protection protocols were enforced.

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Flood Protection Authority

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U.S. Representative Cedric Richmond Holds Media Briefing

U.S. Representative Cedric Richmond held a media briefing on Tuesday, November 17, 2020, in the Atrium of the New Orleans Lakefront Airport during which he announced his departure from Congress to accept the position of Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement in President-elect Biden's administration.

Congressman Richmond was first elected to Congress in 2010 and just re-elected to a sixth congressional term from a district that includes most of New Orleans, parts of Jefferson Parish and the River Parishes and portions of Baton Rouge.



Photograph courtesy of Chris Granger



Congressman Richmond, a native of New Orleans and graduate of Tulane Law School, began his career in public office at 26. He served in the Louisiana House of Representatives 11 years before winning his seat in Congress.

As a native New Orleanian, Congressman Richmond has first hand knowledge about the region's flood protection history and needs. His new role in the Biden Administration will place him in a unique position to provide information and advice to the President and the Administration on issues affecting the people of Louisiana, including flood defense for the Greater New Orleans Metropolitan area.

Message from President Herbert Miller

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Then came a hurricane season like no other. How do you close gates, valves and other structures while maintaining social distancing among employees wherever possible? Every time – seven if I recall - we were faced with these situations the staff managed to pull it off without a hitch. This is a credit to the field personnel and their managers. Throughout it all, our Police Departments maintained order, working with local law enforcement on the closing of Lakeshore Drive and at one point the Bonnabel Boat Launch. And somehow, the grass got cut, the structures were maintained, and civility reigned throughout the organization.

In the public's eye, we are a little-known agency. Many people still call us “the Levee Board” and I must confess that I do as well when speaking about the organization to friends (it's just easier than saying “Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority – East”). However, we do much more than maintain levees. The various flood control structures we maintain and the new PCCP pump stations are critical areas of our responsibility. It is a credit to our employees that we hear so few complaints from the public and receive so many compliments. I am proud to be a part of the organization.

I wish each of you a joyous holiday season and let us all hope for a calmer 2021. Stay safe and stay well.

Herbert Miller, President, Board of Commissioners

Message from Chief Administrative Officer Derek Boese

As 2020 comes to a close, it is important to not only remember the challenges the Authority faced, such as COVID-19 and being in the cone of a storm seven times, but also all of the work and accomplishments that went on despite difficult circumstances. Here are some highlights:

- **Information Technology.** With the onset of COVID-19 in March, it simply would not have been possible to function without videoconferences. Their work to get everyone on laptops, plus the infrastructure backbone for people being able to work from anywhere helped the Authority not miss a beat during COVID.
- **Public Information.** Not only did PIO keep things on track during an incredibly busy storm season, but they also set up a Virtual Reality “tour” of the Surge Barrier and the 17th Street Canal PCCP that can be used during COVID as well as for middle schools throughout the region for educational science.
- **Risk and Safety.** While we can continue to improve, we have cut our Worker’s Compensation costs 75% in the last year. Deputy CAO Rusty Kennedy has also spearheaded the new Asset Management software solution study, consolidating four inspection/work order systems.
- **Finance and Purchasing.** Finance seamlessly adapted to working remotely during the first months of COVID, while also doing “Spring Cleaning” and purging the store room of obsolete items, putting in new shelving (teamed with Maintenance) and cleaning up databases. Invoice processing for projects is now automated, which kept vendors paid quickly – critical for the businesses we use during difficult financial times. They also kept everybody fed and paid during storms.
- **Human Resources/Employee Services.** Despite the pandemic in 2020, HR leveraged the new EAP provider and delivered soft skills training to 84 supervisors. Developing soft skill training for employees is just as important as technical skills. The training covered communications, conflict resolution, leadership, and teamwork competencies that underpin almost every facet of our business operations and employee roles.
- **Police.** COVID put officers in what is already a risk-filled job into more challenging situations, through being in contact with people with unknown health conditions. Despite the circumstances, they maintained their professionalism and continued supporting the community with a response time of four minutes. Support to the FBI Violent Crime Task Force, DEA Interdiction Group and Criminal Intelligence Center led to the arrest of five perpetrators who committed bank robberies in the region, the seizure of 5 Kilos of Meth and 2 Kilos of Heroin, and helping clear 91 open cases.
- **Operations.** Operations responded quickly and effectively to gate seal issues at the Caernarvon Sector Gate, using the winch system to tightly seal the gate during multiple storms and then leveraging our emergency response contracts to dredge the sill. Pump operators both at the Permanent Canal Closures and Pumps (PCCP) and Lake Borgne were on duty constantly, and kept the community dry. The Department also put out \$600K in design work leading to \$8M of construction either now or next year.
- **Maintenance.** The largest Department in the FPA, Maintenance not only kept the system and FPA facilities fully maintained, they successfully closed floodgates and valves for seven storms with no reported injuries during the seven storms. They did this while being understaffed and losing a number of employees at the start of storm season. Maintenance also supported every other FPA Department in one way or another.
- **Engineering.** In addition to construction and field work, Engineering teamed with Finance to develop and update a new project numbering system and create the first-ever Long Term O&M Cost Analysis for the entire HSDRRS. Inspectors and GIS were extremely active throughout the year, starting with High River inspections, using drones to video 24 miles of the 40 Arpent Levee for certification, and then conducting bathymetric and LIDAR surveys of the three outfall canals. Their quarterly, semiannual and annual inspections led to 500+ work orders to Maintenance. Engineering also has over \$14M in projects either bidding, under construction or built this year along Lakeshore Drive alone with millions of dollars underway everywhere else including the W33 floodgate repairs, NASA levee reconstruction, outfall canal erosion control projects, and East Jefferson foreshore pilot study projects. Finally, they overhauled the Emergency Management Plan to make it more accurate, teamed with Maintenance to develop a streamlined gate closure/opening process, and checked the system after every storm.

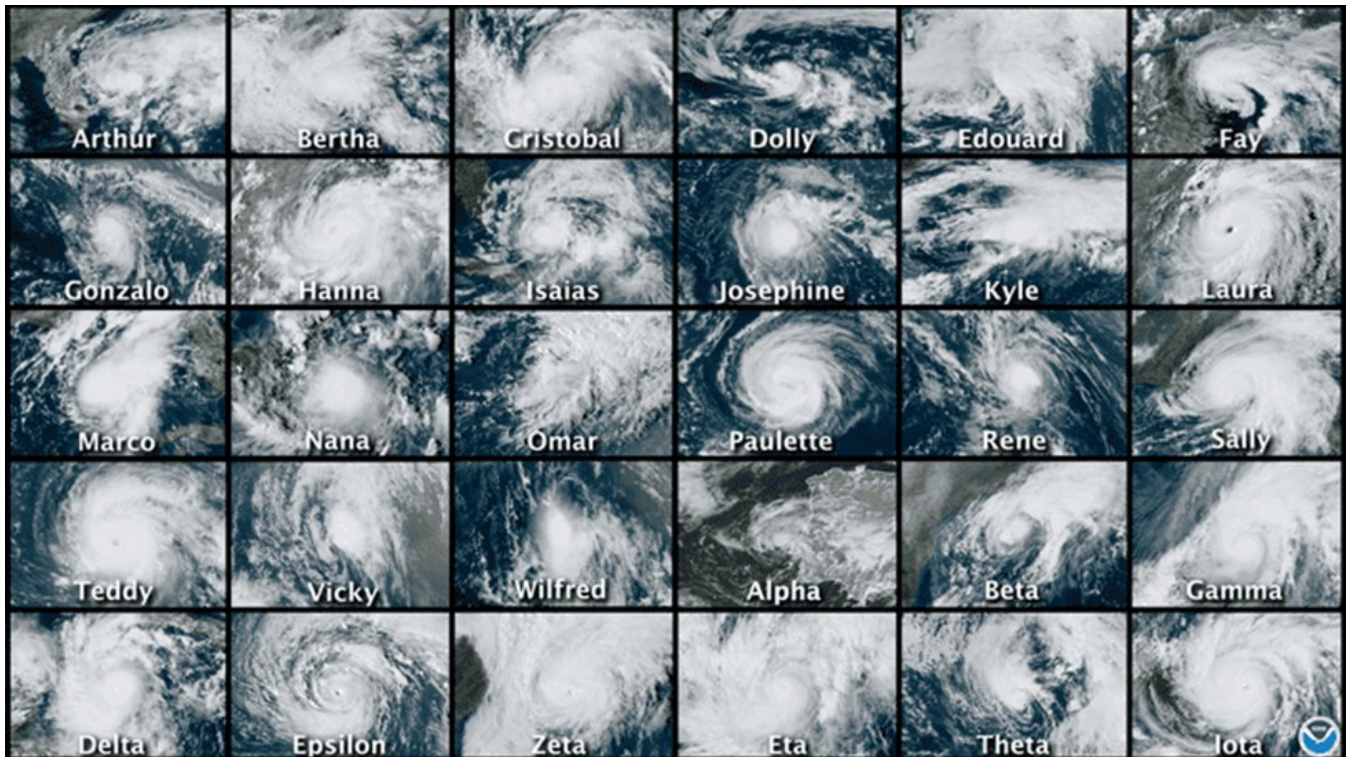
This summary does not include the Legal Department and Governmental Affairs and the work they do that often goes unseen.

Thanks to all employees for a successful year. Stay safe and healthy, and we’ll see you in 2021.

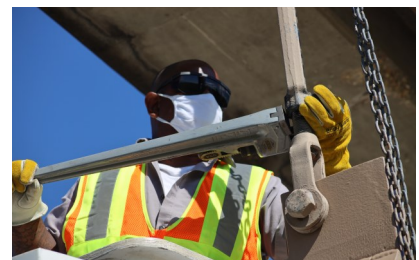
2020 - A Record Breaking Hurricane Season

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was the most active and seventh costliest Atlantic hurricane season on record. It was the second season to use the Greek letter storm naming system, the first being 2005. Thirteen of the 30 named storms (top winds of 39 mph or greater) became hurricanes (top winds of 74 mph or greater), and six became major hurricanes (top winds of 111 mph or greater). Twelve named storms/hurricanes made landfall in the contiguous United States, breaking the record of nine set in 1916.

2020 was a season of unprecedented activity, taking an early start with the formation of Tropical Storm Arthur in May and extending to mid-late November with Hurricane Iota. Fueled by a La Nina that developed in the summer months of 2020, 10 tropical cyclones underwent rapid intensification, tying it with 1995.



With each hurricane season, and with each storm event, the FPA's first responders increase in expertise, knowledge and efficiencies. An After Action Review is conducted after each event during which staff reviews all activities and actions taken. Lessons learned from each event are incorporated into the FPA's procedures so that the FPA becomes an even more proficient organization for the next storm.



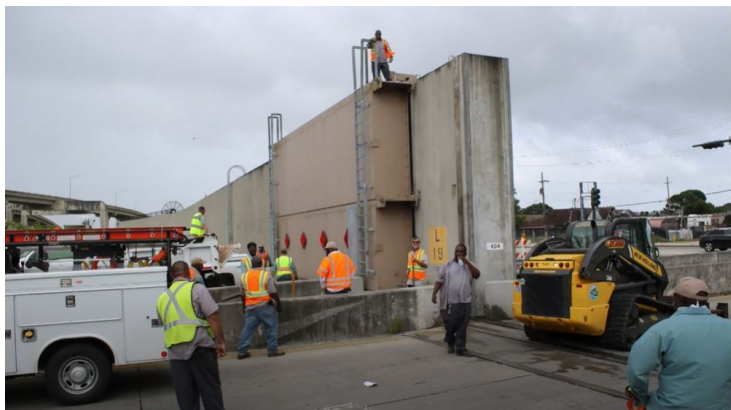
The FPA also takes advantage of new technologies as they are developed to assist with preparing for potential storm impacts. One such technology is the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's (CPRA) ADCIRC model runs. The CPRA engaged LSU and UNC-Chapel Hill to produce ADCIRC model runs via their supercomputers for named storms that enter the Gulf. The ADCIRC model runs are received approximately every six hours and have proven to be very beneficial in assisting with surge predictions at different locations throughout the system.

2020 - A Record Breaking Hurricane Season

The FPA staff monitors all tropical weather events. Due to the unpredictability of tropical storms and hurricanes, relative to both storm path and intensification, the FPA remains vigilant and ready to respond to all tropical storms entering the Gulf.

Tropical Storm Cristobal, which began its formation on June 1st, presented an early opportunity to test the protocols and measures that were developed to allow essential FPA employees to safely continue their duties and responsibilities, and remain on duty providing 24/7 operations, maintenance and security capabilities in response to approaching tropical storms and hurricanes, while in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

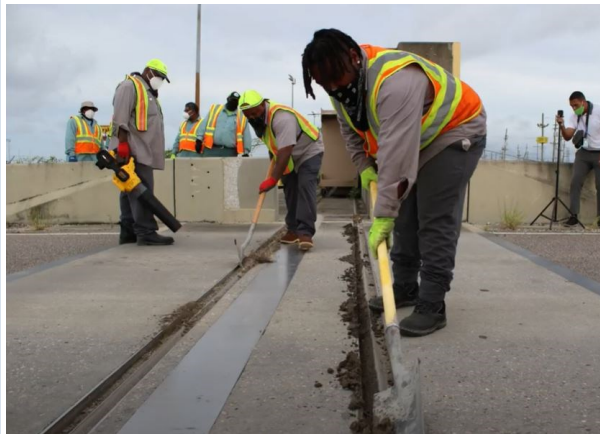
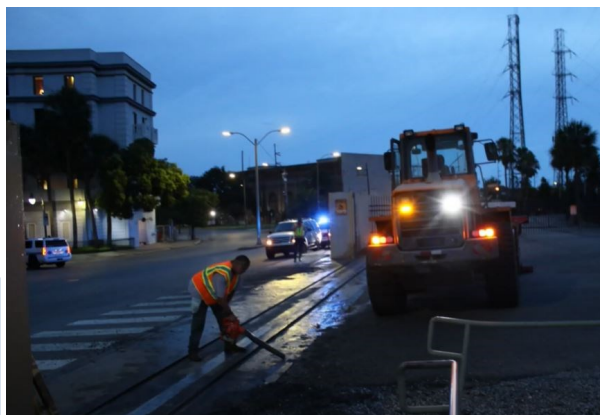
This year Southeast Louisiana was in the forecast cone of seven tropical storms/hurricanes (Cristobal, Marco, Laura, Sally, Beta, Delta and Zeta). The FPA team of operations, maintenance, security and support personnel expertly responded to each storm to ensure the closure of the flood defense system, as needed, and the operation of the various features of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.



The Flood Protection Authority's team of dedicated knowledgeable, professional and skilled employees work seamlessly together to ensure the integrity and operation of all features of the flood defense system, which includes a total of 191 miles of federal and non-federal riverine and hurricane flood protection levees and floodwalls, 255 land based floodgates, 101 valves, 5.4 miles of seawall, Permanent Canal Closures and Pumps (PCCP) at the 17th Street and Orleans and London Avenue Outfall Canals, eight navigation flood control structures (IHNC Surge Barrier Sector and Barge Gates; Bayou Bienvenue Vertical Lift Gate and Sector Gate; Seabrook Complex; and Bayou Dupre, Bayou St. John and Caernarvon Sector Gates), and the 1.8 mile long IHNC Surge Barrier — the largest continuous storm surge barrier in the world located at the confluence of the MRGO and GIWW.



IHNC Surge Barrier Sector Gate and Barge Gate. Above with Barge Gate open; below with Barge Gate closed.



FPA 2020 Employees of the Year

The Flood Protection Authority (FPA) selects an employee each year to receive the FPA Employee of the Year Award. The employee selected must not only have performed his/her job in an exemplary manner, but goes above and beyond in service to his/her fellow employees and in furthering the FPA's mission of flood defense and public safety.

2020 has been a year of huge challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. FPA employees had to adhere to safety protocols in order to keep themselves, their families and fellow employees safe from contracting the COVID-19 virus, and all the while seamlessly continuing the operation and maintenance of the FPA's massive flood defense system and administrative functions. The extremely active hurricane season with almost back-to-back late season storms tested the dedication and commitment of FPA employees, and our employees responded commendably and tirelessly with professionalism, hard work and outstanding service.

The Employee of the Year is selected from nominations submitted each month by FPA's employees for the Employee of the Month Award. Because of their contribution to the FPA and its mission, the way in which they exemplify the values of the FPA, and their eagerness to go the extra mile, the FPA was unable to narrow its selection to a single employee and selected Michael LeBlanc and Christopher Lucas as the FPA's Co-Employees of the Year. The FPA also selected Sergeant Vance Bieniemy as the Police Officer of the Year for his contribution to the FPA and its mission and his commitment to law enforcement.

Michael LeBlanc

Mike LeBlanc joined the FPA on July 8, 2013, and is a Maintenance Superintendent in Operations & Maintenance – Floodgates.



Mike is well known for his dedication to teamwork and for his hard work, dependability and readiness to help anyone who need it. He takes on any task that is requested, whether or not it specifically relates to his job duties, and completes all the tasks meticulously.

Mike consistently provides assistance to the Engineering Department and is a reliable source of information in the field. He has proved himself to be an invaluable part of the organization through his regular day-to-day duties, during typical high tide events, and most impressively through his work and coordination during tropical storms and hurricanes.

Mike recently assisted the Engineering staff during Tropical Storm Beta by conducting periodic gate inspections over the weekend (on a Sunday) as the tides rose to determine the tide elevation in which these gates experienced flooding so that the trigger points for future gate closures could be fine-tuned. During the same day and late into the evening, he also investigated a seepage concern reported by a concerned citizen long after his scheduled shift ended.

Mike embodies the definition of a mission focused team player and his expertise, skills and experience make him essential to the successful accomplishment of the FPA's flood defense mission.

The FPA is fortunate to have Mike as a member of its team.

Pictured: Mike LeBlanc performing floodgate maintenance repairs.



FPA 2020 Employees of the Year

Christopher Lucas



Chris Lucas joined the FPA on March 25, 2019, and is a Procurement Manager 1 in Finance/Purchasing. Over the past year Chris has had to face a number of challenges after three coworkers who made up the remainder of the Purchasing support team retired within a week of each other with little notice. During this time Chris not only stepped up to the plate taking on many extra duties and responsibilities, and did so admirably, he also found time to train Finance's new employees and give the store room at the Franklin facility a complete overhaul.

Chris treats all FPA employees as his customers and goes above and beyond to procure the items they need to get the job done.

Chris has been a key player in the FPA's regionalization efforts and the culture change within the organization. He is a member of the culture team within the Finance Department and is active in planning department activities and promoting cohesion and teamwork.

Hurricane Barry was the first storm the FPA experienced since Chris joined the team. After the storm Chris proposed and implemented many new ideas and improvements to support the Finance Department and serve the FPA's essential workers who remained on 24-hour duty during storm events. Chris showed his dedication and commitment to teamwork through the record breaking hurricane season working long hours before the storms to ensure the needed food and supplies were procured and distributed to the FPA's other facilities and working through the storm events providing support to the essential workers who remained on duty.



Chris is an excellent example for all FPA team members and a great asset to the Finance team and the FPA. His contribution is essential to the success of the FPA as an organization.

Sergeant Vance Bieniemy

Vance Bieniemy joined the Orleans Levee District Police Department on August 23, 2004. Sgt. Bieniemy was selected as the Police Officer of the Year for his professionalism as a law enforcement officer, his commitment to the FPA and its values, and his dedication to public service.

On March 9, 2020, Sgt. Bieniemy and Officers Ryan Frazier and Gabriel Faucetta responded to a carjacking on the University of New Orleans campus. While effecting a perimeter, a vehicular pursuit ensued with the suspects. The carjackers, who were trailing one another in two separate stolen cars, refused to stop for the officers.



The vehicles eventually fled in different directions. Sgt. Bieniemy pursued the vehicle that was carjacked, while Officer Frazier and Officer Faucetta pursued the other vehicle. The carjacking perpetrator crashed and fled on foot while discharging a firearm at Sgt. Bieniemy near Interstate 10 and Bullard Avenue. Sgt. Bieniemy continued trailing the perpetrator despite being fired upon. The perpetrator and the weapon were apprehended with the assistance of the New Orleans Police Department. Sgt. Bieniemy displayed true perseverance and commitment to duty as a law enforcement officer. His courageous actions were the primary factor in the apprehension of the suspect.

Sgt. Bieniemy is a tremendous asset to the FPA, the law enforcement community and the public we serve.

FPA Public Information Alerts

sign-up



If we can't **REACH** you
we can't **ALERT** you

The Flood Protection Authority-East (FPA) strives to provide timely information to the public regarding public safety issues, closures and events that impact people, businesses and communities in order to minimize disruptions and keep the public safe and informed. The FPA implemented the Everbridge Management Platform for providing alerts to the public.

Everbridge is the industry standard using the most up-to-date communication technology and is widely used throughout federal, state and local government agencies, organizations, commerce and industry.

The FPA offers subscriptions to the following Keywords:

Floodgate (Any information on floodgate opening, closing or maintenance)

FPAEast (Any general news about the Flood Protection Authority-East)

River (Any information about the High River or the Mississippi River)

HighTide (Information regarding gate openings and closures as they relate to high tide situations)

It's a simple process to register for these Emergency Alerts. Text the appropriate Keyword listed above to "333111" for the alerts you would like to receive. Should you wish to receive alerts offered under more than one Keyword, each Keyword must be texted to "333111".

Serving Our Bilingual Communities

The Flood Protection Authority-East has teamed up with TNola Languages in an effort to serve our bilingual communities. Press releases from the FPA-East and Everbridge alerts are now available in Spanish.

Antwan Harris, Public Information Director, said "We want to make sure all communities are served and represented in the work we do here. We have plans to incorporate more languages in the coming year."

To receive Everbridge Spanish alerts please text FPAEspanol to 333111

Flood Protection Authority Monthly Board Meetings can be viewed via livestream by visiting the FPA website www.floodauthority.org/ and clicking on the Facebook icon located at the top right corner of the page or going to: www.facebook.com/FloodProtectionAuthority/.

The Flood Protection Authority urges everyone to become informed about their flood defense system and encourages organizations and business and community groups to schedule a tour of the IHNC-Lake Borgne Surge Barrier and Permanent Canal Closure and Pumps (PCCP) Stations.

The Flood Protection Authority has postponed all tours of the IHNC Lake Borgne Surge Barrier and Permanent Closures and Pumps (PCCP) Stations at this time due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The FPA will resume the tours when conditions allow.

When tours resume, to schedule a tour of the IHNC Surge Barrier and/or PCCP, visit our website at floodauthority.org and click on "Schedule Facility Tours" at the bottom of our home page. Fill out the Tour Information Sheet and click on "submit" at the bottom of the sheet.

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