

Chapter 9

Regional Security

9.1 Introduction

Safety concerns are associated with vehicle crashes. These are random unintentional events. As such, they may be caused by driver error or impairment, adverse weather, a temporary hazard in the right-of-way, poor infrastructure or other factors related to the transportation infrastructure, the operator performance or the vehicle design.

In contrast to safety concerns, security threats always connote intention, whether committed by an individual or a group. There have always been underlying security risks associated with our transportation infrastructure. Prior to September 11, 2001, these risks may normally have been related to vandalism. But since September 11, the country has been forced to assess our vulnerability and prepare for a very different threat focus.

Finally, hurricanes are a special issue of concern to south Louisiana. Our communities are extremely vulnerable to storm surge inundations, and evacuations are at times the only prudent response to impending storm conditions. Although these events do not imply security threats within the context of post September 11 concern, they pose a substantial risk to the security of the entire region.

9.2 Issues

The State of Louisiana Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) was developed under the auspices of the Governor's Office of Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security (GOHSEP). The Louisiana EOP includes guidance for preparedness for the full range of natural, technological, terrorist, and attack-related emergencies and disasters. It conforms to federal law and regulations and the Louisiana Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act as amended.

This Plan provides a general framework, within which State agencies, Parish agencies, volunteer groups, and private organizations can develop procedures, arrangements, and agreements to prepare for and respond to terrorist attacks, emergencies and disasters. Although the Plan does not identify a specific role for the Metropolitan Planning Organization, it is within the spirit of the Plan that MPOs can participate with local and state government agencies and community organizations to support the work envisioned within the Plan framework.

The HTMPO region is saturated with infrastructure critical to our national economy. This include:

- The Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP), which is connected to over 50 percent of the U.S. refinery capacity and has offloaded over 7 billion barrels of foreign crude oil since its inception.

- Onshore and offshore energy production and distribution facilities. These contribute to a significant portion of the country's energy production and our national economy.
- Support industries serving offshore oil and gas production.
- Roadway and rail infrastructure providing direct access to these industries and associated petrochemical refining facilities.

Although this infrastructure presents a myriad of potential terrorist targets, at this time, the HTMPO does not envision itself as having a role in the assessment or response to terrorist threats. Rather, the agency has focused and continues to focus on activities associated with hurricane preparation, evacuation and response.

Within south Louisiana, the threat of a hurricane is exacerbated by the large population of residents and tourists in the low-lying coastal areas susceptible to storm surge inundation and freshwater flooding. Inland urban population centers such as Houma and Thibodaux are also susceptible to flooding and the effects of hurricane force winds.

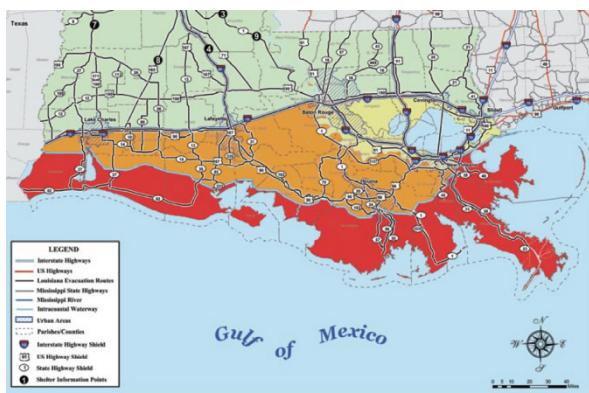


Figure 9-1 was extracted from the *Louisiana Citizens Awareness and Disaster Evacuation Guide - Southwest* (Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness 2008). In the state's phased evacuation plan, emergency traffic management begins in the red area 50 hours before the predicted onset of tropical storm winds. Emergency traffic management begins in the orange areas 40 hours before the predicted onset and in the yellow areas 30 hours before onset.

Figure 9-1

Every hurricane produces a unique evacuation event. Evacuees are influenced by the amount of notice provided in advance of the storm's landfall as well as the projected storm path and intensity. The HTMPO supports a broad range of activities associated with the planning and response to hurricane events.

Facilities

1. In Hurricane Rita the HTMPO headquarters building became the de facto center of emergency operations and response for Terrebonne Parish. The agency has continued to secure the building complex, making it more resistant to direct impact of storm events. The facility has also been upgraded with additional back-up power and enhanced communication capabilities. The

HTMPO will continue to review the capabilities of the headquarters complex and provide enhancements to support continued operations during hurricane storm events.

2. The following project investigates opportunities for providing a new hurricane evacuation route to expedite evacuation from Houma-Thibodaux to LA 3127, and subsequent crossings of the Mississippi River at Donaldsonville and Gramercy. The HTMPO will continue to support planning for this project.

Houma-Thibodaux to LA 3127 Connection

State Project No. 700--99—0302

Federal Project No. HP 9902((518))

Data Collection during Storm Events

The HTMPO monitored traffic counts associated with the evacuation during Hurricane Gustav. The agency will continue to monitor hurricane evacuations to develop additional data on such events, which in turn will provide decision makers a better understanding of event dynamics.

Use of Area Transit Systems to Support Evacuation Events

The HTMPO will work with local transit providers to investigate opportunities for use of transit vehicles to provide for evacuation of transit dependant populations.

Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) in Evacuation Planning

The HTMPO supports investment in ITS technologies. The HTMPO endorses a study of how this technology can be used to assist evacuees in their decision making and expedite their progress during evacuation events.

Integration of Hurricane Evacuation Purpose and Need in Planning for Future Roadway Improvements

As the MTP plan projects are refined within the context of the LADOTD delivery process, project features will be reviewed for consistency with a hurricane evacuation Purpose and Need.