

**Hurricane Ida** Landfall August 29, 2021

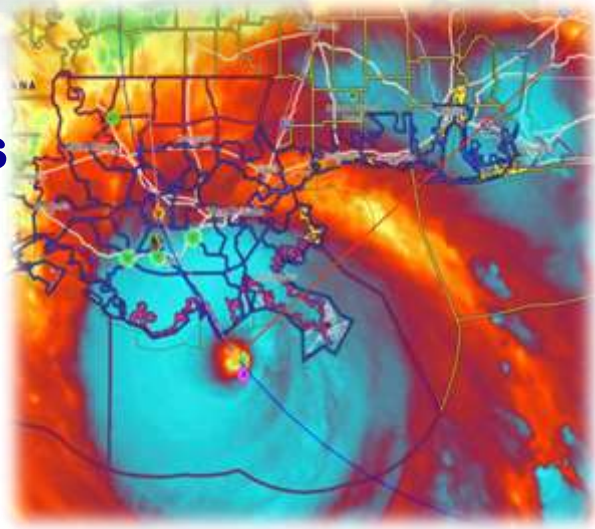
Around 11:55 AM CDT  
Near Port Fourchon, LA  
Winds 150 mph  
Category 4  
Pressure 930 mb



2022 AAPA Communications Awards



7. Overall Campaign



## *Summary*

With 9 of the top 10 Lafourche Parish taxpayers and 5 of the top 10 Lafourche Parish employers operating from and/or utilizing Port Fourchon, it is of the utmost importance to have Port Fourchon up and always running, especially when considering that the Port services nearly 100% of all Deepwater Offshore Energy Activity in the Gulf of Mexico.

During the late morning hours of Sunday, August 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida slowly inched toward Port Fourchon threatening businesses, lives, homes, and access to all basic needs as an extremely strong Category 4 hurricane.

Many Greater Lafourche Port Commission (GLPC) staff members, Harbor Police, and Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Officers rode out the storm in our Administrative Office Building in Cut Off, while Hurricane Ida was causing roof damage to the same building everyone was sheltering inside. During this storm trees were uprooted, cars got overturned, and houses were destroyed. Parish water and electricity services were disrupted because of power outages, but also from direct damage during the storm. With our backup generator services, we never lost power or communication at our administrative office, which proved critical in helping us continue our messaging efforts that began well in advance of the storm. Emergency services were disrupted as Ida came onshore remaining offline for up to 24 hours after landfall. Delays in recovery due to lack of power, obstructions in roadways, and sunken vessels in the waterways were all experienced.

After the storm passed, nearly all the energy production along the Gulf Coast was shut down and businesses in the 10th Ward were closed or damaged. Thousands of emergency crew members were deployed to Louisiana, as hundreds of residents needed assistance. Power outages in the most heavily affected areas were expected to last for months, but thankfully most power was restored within five-to-six weeks. Our Harbor Police and some staff started to venture out to access the damages the next day. With each day the Port is non-operable, the nation loses \$46 million in oil and gas production and \$528 million in GDP.

## *Challenges or Opportunities*

Historically, the GLPC and Port Fourchon are far from novices when it comes to storm prep and dealing with the aftermath of storm events. With this said, our agency depends on the local news media, Lafourche Parish Government, and others to keep us in tune with what's going on as we in turn communicate with our tenants and users as well as the community at large.

The challenge always is to get updates/notifications out in a timely fashion before, during, and after a storm, while also making sure to go through our own internal checklist to make sure we are protecting the Port and our people in advance of a storm threat. We send out notifications through a messaging platform that helps Port Fourchon engage and deliver news via emails to subscribers of our Notify Me system. We also communicate through our social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter.

Although Ida was different than others in terms of its severity and damage profile, the process to communicate remained the exact same as it has for past storm events. Most of our staff stayed in the relative safety of our main administrative building, while others evacuated the area entirely. While we had to regroup to save some equipment and get situated in a better place since our main building suffered water damage, we continued to have outside communications and were able to continue with our updates, press releases, press conferences, and posts on our social media platforms even sharing from the Lafourche Parish Government, Lafourche Parish Sherriff's Office, and local weather channel, etc.

## *Mission*

While increasing awareness of a crisis in the Port Fourchon area through a natural disaster, accident, and weather conditions, we stay calm and measured while generating our communications to keep our community protected, which in turn helps us in our role to foster the very best for our local economy and preserve our environment and heritage.

## *Planning and Programming Components*

Port Fourchon is located at the southeastern end of Lafourche Parish which supplies about 18% of our country's oil supply. We are constantly planning for emergencies because of our strategical importance to the Nation. We also hold an annual Port Fourchon Hurricane Readiness Meeting with the help of the National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States Coast Guard, and Lafourche Parish Government Office of Emergency Preparedness. These meetings communicate plans and serve as a guide for our tenants, customers, visitors, local communities, and staff. Our objective is to protect human life, property, and operations while communicating what's going on at the port and surrounding areas. Most facilities can withstand a powerful storm. We work with our tenants to communicate to secure their yards and keep their staff safe. We have our Harbor Police Department patrol and use multiple technologies like cameras and surveillance systems. We are highly engaged before, during, and after the storm, just as we were for Ida.

We also have a dedicated Weather & Storm Info Page on our website that is regularly updated by our Port Affairs Coordinator with current storm information. We have a Notify Me section on that same page to sign up for informational updates from the Port Commission. People can subscribe or unsubscribe to everything from Local Road & Bridge updates, Bayou Floodgate & Lock updates, Weather & Storm Season updates, Meeting Notices, Press Releases, Seaport Facilities Notices, and Airport Facilities Notices. We have several links to the U.S. Coast Guard, Lafourche Parish Government's Office of Emergency Preparedness, South Lafourche Levee District, NOAA, Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness, Entergy (which includes their Storm Center), National Hurricane Center, FEMA, Small Business Administration, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, American Red Cross, and Salvation Army for helpful information that may be needed. For our businesses in Port Fourchon and the South Lafourche Airport, they can update their directory listings, emergency or facility Safety Operators, and their Cybersecurity contact with us. We communicate this through press releases, website, and social media to have our tenants, their customers, employees, and visitors sign up for these notifications. You can view our current Hurricane Readiness Meeting Presentation, by viewing our Storm Phases, our governing documents, past weather watch updates, and much information and links to other helpful agencies.

We have produced pre-made templates for putting out messages on our emailing and social media platforms. This helps us post timely content with regular updates on what's going on around the port and our community, while collecting additional information from the levee district, sheriff's office, parish government, state government, etc.

All our communication is approved by our Executive Director before being sent out. With the Director of Communications, Port Affairs Coordinator, and Homeland Security Specialist keeping up to date on all the developing issues as well.

Our goals are to increase awareness of Port Fourchon and its economic benefits by reaching a broader audience, driving traffic to the website, and conveying what conditions are expected at the port and what is scheduled. Social media helps expand the reach of our messages due to social sharing and the vast number of followers who actively utilize our platforms. We continue to improve our use of social media, not only to share the Port's information but to be a good neighbor letting the community know what's happening. We post useful content and consistent updates on the status of what's going on and what is needed in our area from other agencies when needed like during this storm from the local news, radio stations, sheriff's office, and the parish/state government offices.



## *Actions/Communication Outputs*

During this Hurricane Ida Storm crisis, our first news release regarding a weather potential impact was issued as it started out as a tropical wave in the Caribbean on August 26<sup>th</sup>, and we continued to update the community regularly through October 14, 2021, as our final notice.

How we start our Phases:



**Phase 1: Storm Watch:** This phase indicates that GLPC is monitoring a weather condition in the Gulf of Mexico that is expected to affect the Gulf Coast.

*Port personnel will begin sending weather updates to port facilities and anyone who signed up for notifications. This phase was issued on August 26<sup>th</sup> and updated later that day.*

**Phase 2: Voluntary Evacuation:** This phase indicates that tropical force winds are expected to be in Port Fourchon within 72 hours.

*We skipped this phase for the storm because the storm was strengthening and forecast to be in port within 50 hours.*



**Phase 3: Recommended Evacuation:** This phase indicates that tropical force winds are expected to be in Port Fourchon within 50 hours.

*This phase was issued the morning of August 27<sup>th</sup>*

*This morning August 27<sup>th</sup> we opened our emergency Storm, Harbor Marina, to commercial fishing vessels seeking safe harbor within the South Lafourche Levee System.*



**Phase 4: Mandatory Evacuation:** This phase indicates that tropical force winds are expected to be in Port Fourchon within 36 hours.

*This phase was issued the morning of August 28<sup>th</sup> from our Lafourche Parish President's order, and we moved in conjunction with our Parish President.*

*This phase was issued late afternoon on August 27<sup>th</sup>, and on August 28<sup>th</sup> in the late morning and afternoon.*

*LA Highway 1 is compromised any time tides are unusually high or inclement weather forms in the Gulf of Mexico. LA Hwy 1 is usually closed at the Leon Theriot Lock in Golden Meadow by the South Lafourche Levee District closing the gates over LA 1 with police monitoring the situation. The Port Fourchon Harbor Police are usually the last ones out and the first ones in.*

*On the late morning of August 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida came through Port Fourchon, and then early afternoon everyone at our Administrative Office hunkered down. With the help of our Port Affairs Coordinator, stays on top of getting local government updates and information, messages got out on our website, and mass emailing system. Our Director of Communications gets information out on social media platforms.*





**Phase 5: Storm in Port** This phase indicates that tropical force winds are expected to be in Port Fourchon within 24 hours.

*This Phase was issued on the morning of August 29, 2021.*

*We had to deal with the 911 system being down they had to reroute phones to other numbers, there was no running water south of the Intracoastal Canal (10<sup>th</sup> Ward of Lafourche Parish).*

*Port Fourchon experienced a direct hit by a strong Category 4 hurricane. Impacts included extreme and sustained hurricane-force winds and a storm surge of 12 to 14 feet.*





**Recovery Phase:** This phase indicates that the storm has passed: port personnel is entering the area assessing the damages to highways and facilities and clearing debris. The purpose of the Recovery Phase is to ensure that Port Fourchon is safe and operational as soon as possible after a storm. As soon as safety allows, a port re-entry team will coordinate a damage assessment of all waterways and roadways leading into and out of Port Fourchon.

*This phase was issued late afternoon on August 30, 2021.*

*Meanwhile, the waterways into and within Port Fourchon and all along Bayou Lafourche were impeded by multiple obstructions and sunken vessels. The floodgates remained closed to all marine traffic. LA Highway 1 was closed south of the Leon Theriot Locks in Golden Meadow, because some of the roadway was washed out and unstable.*

Also on August 31, 2021, our Port Director had the opportunity to get his eyes on Port Fourchon from the air. He indicated that Port Fourchon was beaten and battered. Considering what had happened, this was far from the end of our amazing Port's 60-plus-year-old story. Our Parish President released that afternoon residents could return, but also reminded them of no access to clean water and no electrical power and it would not be restored for some time. Nearly all communication was down including cell phone service, and many homes were severely damaged and uninhabitable. We did not have access to food at this time due to the amount of damage to stores. Distribution sites were opened for water and ice.



2022 AAPA Communications Awards



7. Overall Campaign

Port Fourchon

# HURRICANE IDA TIMELINE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20TH

Hurricane Ida makes landfall at 11:55 a.m. as a Category 4 storm. Reports of sustained winds above Category 5 strength (156 mph) were recorded aboard a vessel in Port Fourchon with a confirmed gust of 223 mph. Storm surge was recorded to be 30-feet at the height of the storm. Despite overtopping in several spots, the South Lafourche Levee District flood protection system kept water from inundating the 10th-Ward area of South Lafourche.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31ST – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST

Roadways leading down to the Port were cleared of debris. Water recedes from roadways on Tuesday afternoon.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST

Congressman Steve Scalise meets with GLPC Executive Director Chett Chiasson, Parish President Archie Chiasson, Board President Chuckie Cheramie, Board Secretary Mike Callois and Board Member T-Jim Lafont at the South Lafourche Leonard J. Miller, Jr. Airport.



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND

Tenant assessment teams allowed to visit facilities. NOAA survey teams find NO significant obstructions in Belle Pass, which is the main channel leading in and out of the Gulf of Mexico. GLPC Executive Director Chett Chiasson participates in press conference at the Lafourche Parish Governmental Complex in Mathews.



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD

**U.S. Coast Guard deems Belle Pass safe to traverse with restrictions in place.** President Biden and Governor Edwards visit South Lafourche Airport and meet with local leaders, including GLPC Executive Director Chett Chiasson.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH

Temporary fire and emergency services are brought online in the Port.



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH

Administrative operations are moved to building behind main complex. Main administrative complex was heavily damaged.



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH

First tenants resume operations in the Port.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH

Senator Bill Cassidy meets with Chiasson, Cheramie, and T-John Melancon at new administrative building. Tours damaged administrative building as well.



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH

Congressmen Garret Graves & Troy Carter as well as Congresswoman Julia Letlow meet with Chiasson and Cheramie outside of EOC building Port Fourchon. GLPC Executive Director Chett Chiasson participates in another press conference at the Lafourche Parish Governmental Complex in Mathews.



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH

New temporary office building is brought online fully and administrative staff are set up with equipment and work spaces.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH

U.S. Navy salvage team in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers starts enacting plan to clear multiple obstructions in Bayou Lafourche, including the area between the Ted Gisclair Floodgate in Larose and The Leon Theriot Lock in Golden Meadow.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH

Nighttime deliveries allowed to resume in the Port with a Harbor Police checkpoint in place.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH

Water service returns to Port Fourchon. Movers clear our former administrative building of all furniture and boxes. These items are placed in the warehouse next to Commissioner Mike Callois's office.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5TH

Power is restored to vast majority of the Port.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14TH

The 25th and final recovery message is sent out on behalf of the GLPC.

## *Communications Outcomes*

The overall response has been positive; followers interacted with the content we posted, by retweets, shares, comments, and likes. One way to measure success is by monitoring the number of people following our updates and seeing no fatalities during this life-threatening Category 4 storm. This dangerous storm raised Port Fourchon's social media profile.



2022 AAPA Communications Awards

7. Overall Campaign

Port Fourchon



Attention garnered by being ground zero for this storm event prompted President Joe Biden to accompany Governor John Bel Edwards to make an official visit to the South Lafourche Airport. We obviously thanked President Biden and Governor Edwards for visiting us as well as the many members of our federal and state delegation that stopped by during our recovery efforts. Volunteers and other organizations, including you, the AAPA, and fellow ports contributed supplies of gas, diesel, food, water, ice, gift cards, etc.



Despite the Port's brief closure, the Port rebounded remarkably well with us opening back daytime maritime navigation activities only nine days following Ida's landfall. To illustrate our remarkable turnaround, our Director of Communications created a graphic off his well-worn Fourchon cap with the wording: Them: Done. Finished. Over. Us: Give our people 8 days and hold our gumbo. Given our importance to the community we serve, we felt like one of the most critical functions we could perform was to project a sense of calm that hopefully helped give our area residents a sense of hope during a difficult time in all our lives.

We would like to think that the continued warnings and the urgency of this storm saved lives with our continued communications. We did not outsource any of our communication which was managed by dedicated staff. These efforts yielded better than 100 short-form and long-form messages in addition to hundreds of shared and self-generated social media posts that consistently were put out to the population on behalf of the GLPC.

Port Fourchon  
Published by Thad Angeloz · September 17, 2021 · 🌐

Mother Nature unleashed her full fury on our Port, Port Fourchon, on August 29th. Make no mistake, we were hit hard by Ms. Ida. However, our people refused to stay on the mat for long. Through grit and an other worldly determination, we had tenants resume operations in the Port on Day 9 after the storm passed.

The recovery continues as well as the ramp-up of operations as we understand our collective roles in meeting this country's energy demands. #WeAreFourchon #ReadyTodayReadyforTomorrow #WeWillEndure

**THEM: DONE.  
FINISHED. OVER.  
US: GIVE OUR PEOPLE 8 DAYS,  
AND HOLD OUR GUMBO!**

18,329 People reached    1,193 Engagements    ↑ +12.9x higher Distribution score    Boost post

👍❤️ 347    16 Comments 94 Shares