



**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Inspector General**

2006-P-00014  
March 7, 2006

# At a Glance

*Catalyst for Improving the Environment*

## Why We Did This Review

This review was conducted in conjunction with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency as part of its examination of relief efforts provided by the Federal Government in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We conducted this evaluation to assess the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) and Louisiana's efforts to ensure that the public was provided with safe drinking water after Katrina.

## Background

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, a Category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, devastated parts of Louisiana and rendered many drinking water systems inoperable. By August 31, 2005, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals issued boil order advisories for 15 parishes affected by the hurricane.

**For further information,  
contact our Office of  
Congressional and Public  
Liaison at (202) 566-2391.**

**To view the full report,  
click on the following link:  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/  
20060307-2006-P-00014.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20060307-2006-P-00014.pdf)**

## **EPA's and Louisiana's Efforts to Assess and Restore Public Drinking Water Systems after Hurricane Katrina**

### **What We Found**

Our review indicated that the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and drinking water systems operators provided the public with timely and accurate information about the safety and proper treatment of drinking water. According to EPA staff, 59,260 drinking water flyers were distributed in parishes affected by the hurricane. Two publications related to drinking water protection, *What to Do after the Flood* and *Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water*, were published in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Louisiana's process for determining the safety of drinking water appeared adequate to support the determinations made. EPA Region 6 provided critical assistance to Louisiana in making these determinations. This assistance included assessing water systems, collecting and analyzing drinking water samples, and providing information to the public about drinking water quality. Disease monitoring after Hurricane Katrina indicated that drinking water supplies were not a source of bacteriological infection. Neither EPA, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, nor local water system operators we spoke with had identified or heard of occurrences of waterborne illnesses or diseases from drinking contaminated water in the 2 months following Hurricane Katrina.

With assistance from EPA and others, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals had assessed the operational capacity of 600 public water systems in areas affected by the hurricane by September 20, 2005, and all systems by the end of October 2005. While there has been considerable progress in assessing the operational status of 1,591 drinking water systems in Louisiana and bringing damaged facilities back on-line, substantial work remains to restore the drinking water infrastructure to pre-Katrina conditions. Louisiana officials are in the process of tabulating the estimated cost of replacements and repairs. The most recent public water system recovery estimates for Hurricane Katrina are about \$380 million. Three of the four water systems in our study account for approximately \$360 million of this estimate.

Our review did not identify any conditions requiring corrective actions and no recommendations are made.