



Storm Recovery News

December 2005

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We're meeting challenges on a daily basis

My fellow Biloxians:

It's been less than a hundred days since Aug. 29, the day we saw our lives, our way of life and our beloved city changed forever.

We're continuing to make progress on a wide range of short-term and long-term issues. Residents are making repairs or rebuilding their homes; businesses are beginning to rebuild or have re-opened in some cases.



Reconstruction is well underway on our major roadways and bridges, and hundreds of debris workers are continuing to haul tons of debris from streets and neighborhoods throughout our city.

A steady stream of volunteers and building supplies are regularly making their way to Biloxi from businesses, churches, civic groups and individuals in towns and cities across the country.

These caring individuals have been inspired by the spirit they've seen here in Biloxi. They're seeing firsthand what we have known for years – that we're a resilient people and we're up to the challenge.

Make no mistake: Biloxi is coming back – bigger and better.

The biggest challenge we face at the moment is balancing the day-to-day issues with the planning for long-term recovery.

We're painfully aware of the short-term issues – establishing temporary housing, moving daily traffic on our limited roadways, and rebuilding our vital facilities. We also face the task of implementing elevation codes that are fair to property owners in low-lying areas yet minimize the threat from future storms and flooding.

Of course the most vital issue we face is reaching consensus on an overall vision or blueprint for the future. It should be a plan that embraces and enhances those qualities that have made Biloxi such a special place through the years – and will continue to do so for generations to come.

This vision should include safe and well-designed streets and neighborhoods, thoughtful land-use and zoning that will protect and promote our small-town charm and the excellent quality of life that we had come to appreciate.

Developing this plan and bringing this vision into focus promises to be a huge task, but consider this: We've survived an unprecedented event, and we're a stronger community as a result. We're now in an unprecedented position, where we can realize unprecedented potential.

The prosperity and opportunity we enjoyed over the past 10 to 12 years was only a glimpse of the success we will have in our future.

The hard work and undying spirit the people of Biloxi have shown over the past couple of months make me extremely proud to serve as your mayor.

God bless you and God bless Biloxi.

A.J. Holloway
Mayor

City making progress on debris removal



A sign marks a Point Cadet property where city contractors began removing storm debris.

More than 1 million cubic yards of Hurricane Katrina debris have now been removed from the streets and neighborhoods of Biloxi, and residents whose property remains littered with debris are being encouraged to sign a right of entry agreement that would allow the city to remove the debris as part of the city's overall clean-up efforts.

The city has completed two of its four citywide debris sweeps, and the process of removing debris from private residential properties on Point Cadet, Eagle Point and Holly Hills has begun, with plans in the works to enter private property throughout the city as the process continues.

Even though debris-removal teams have hauled more than 1 million cubic yards of debris – enough debris to cover a football field and stand 47-stories high – Mayor A.J. Holloway estimates that as many as 3 million more cubic yards of debris remain throughout the city.

"Our teams have been working 12-hours days, seven days a week since they began this huge task," Holloway said, "and I'm proud of the work they've done, but we have a ways to go. We're not going to stop until we get it all done."

Under the city's debris-removal plan, anywhere from 30 to 50 debris removal teams have worked initially to haul debris from city rights of way. At the same time, public notices were published and signs were erected on private residential properties in the hardest hit areas of the city – east Biloxi, Eagle Point and Holly Hills – to notify those property owners of the city's intent to remove debris from their private property.

"We're asking people with huge volumes of debris on their property to consider signing rights of entry forms so that we can move this debris now," Holloway said. "We'd like to get as much of it as we can before the FEMA reimbursement runs out."

FEMA plans to reimburse the city the tens of millions of dollars it will cost to remove debris from private residential property and public rights of way. The city has also secured tentative approval for removing debris from commercial property, but only on a case-by-case basis, according to FEMA.

"This entire process is going to take months before all is said and done, and it will probably end up costing more than \$50 million," Holloway said. "But rest assured, we're going to get it done."

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Casino resorts plan to begin re-opening in December

Mayor A.J. Holloway has announced that the city's casino resort industry, which attracted millions of visitors and employed thousands of workers in Biloxi, will begin re-opening to the public in a matter of weeks.

Holloway said he has been encouraged by discussions with representatives of the nine casino resorts in Biloxi.

"It's been less than 100 days – 100 long days – since we were struck by the worst natural disaster to ever strike this country," Holloway said, "but in another indication of the resiliency of this city, it looks like we may see the first of the casino resorts, the Imperial Palace, open its doors as soon as Dec. 20, and a steady process of re-openings in the weeks after that.

"This," Holloway declared, "is what we mean when we tell people we're going to meet this unprecedented natural disaster with an unprecedented response. It has been and

will continue to be a challenging task, but we've shown we're up to it."

IP hopes to open its casino and more than 1,000 refurbished hotel rooms Dec. 20.

The Isle of Capri Casino Resort and the nearby Palace Casino Resort both hope to open temporary casinos in their hotels and re-open their hotel rooms to guests by New Year's Eve. The Isle plans to locate its temporary casino in a hotel ballroom, while the Palace plans to establish its temporary casino on the first and second floors of its hotel.

"There is certainly a good bit of work to be done before these resorts will be ready to open their doors in some cases," Holloway said, "but these target dates should be encouraging news to the thousands of employees and millions of visitors who are anxiously watching our progress here in Biloxi."

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