

Can You Imagine?

By: Rominda

Powerful winds, so strong they tear apart houses, neighborhoods, and communities. Rushing waters knocking down the tallest buildings you once saw stand tall and proud, and the trees struggling to keep hold of the ground, gently letting go and pulling into the storm's eye. Objects flying past – wow, what a mess!

Hurricanes are a type of **coastal storm** and they are very dangerous. Hurricanes have strong winds, heavy rain, and high waves. Hurricanes rank on a scale of a category 1 to a category 5 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale (a category 5 being the strongest and most dangerous).

One very powerful tropical cyclone (hurricane) was Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina began in the Bahamas and hit land in Miami, Florida, then continued across Florida into the Gulf of Mexico where its intensity grew. Finally it hit New Orleans, Louisiana (at its highest wind speed) and proceeded north. As the storm moved it changed from a very minor hurricane, not even considered on the Saffir-Simpson scale, to a category 5 hurricane making it one of the most powerful hurricanes.

Hurricane Katrina has changed the southern community, especially New Orleans, and still does even today. Because of Hurricane Katrina many people lost their lives, which is one of the reasons it was such a big event in history. In addition to the number of people who lost their lives, other problems occurred such as: no houses to live in and no jobs; thus the people who lived in places where Katrina hit couldn't make a living anymore. For that reason, most of the people who lived in Coastal Louisiana, especially New Orleans, had to move to other states. Think about the memories and life they had to leave. Hurricane Katrina was, and still is, a very sad time for the people it affected.

What could have stopped such a horrible storm like Katrina from happening? Researchers have found that it was not very likely that the devastation Hurricane Katrina brought could have been stopped because of the **vulnerability** of the region. The region was vulnerable because of the weakness of the levees. A **levee** is a ridge or bank of solid material such as dirt or concrete put up to act as a barrier to water. A strong storm like Hurricane Katrina was no match for those man-made levees. Also, New Orleans' location contributed to its vulnerability because it is surrounded on three sides by water. New Orleans relied on **electrical powered** pumps to push water uphill away from the city. When Katrina hit, the electricity immediately went out and stopped the pumps from clearing the water. This was all part of the un-preparedness of New Orleans. If Louisiana had paid more attention to the safety of its state, Hurricane Katrina could have been less destructive.

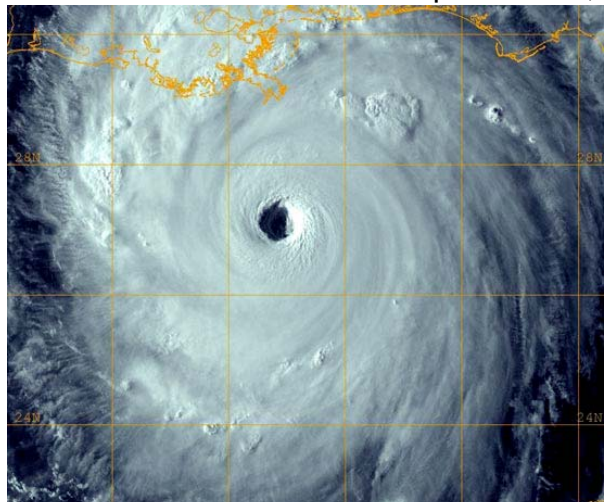


Photo from www.hurricanekatrina.com