

Mayor outlines day-to-day activities in key departments

Here is a department-by-department report on the highlights of 2008, as reported by Mayor Holloway in his State of the City address:

Today, we have 757 city employees. We are 92 percent staffed. In our Police Department, we have 133 uniformed officers and are 90 percent staffed there.

Public Works Department

The Public Works Department's in-house construction team has completed nearly two dozen streets and drainage improvements and is coordinating more than 70 major projects. More than half of those 70 projects are storm related.

In one way or another, the Public Works Department has a hand in every piece of construction in this city – public or private – and the department does this while maintaining miles and miles of city streets, drainage systems, water wells and utilities.

Biloxi Police and Fire departments

The Biloxi Police and Fire departments continue to reach new levels of professionalism and public service.

Last year, we had only three traffic fatalities on our city streets. That's a 10-year low, and I credit that achievement to the presence of our police department and the enforcement job that these dedicated men and women do.

When big things happen in our neighboring cities, they usually call the Biloxi Police Department to help out. We have that training, that equipment and that professionalism working for us each and every day.

Same with our firefighters, who do much, much more than fight fires. Chances are, when you call 911 with any kind of emergency, the Biloxi Fire Department is the first responder, probably in one of the four new fire trucks we purchased in 2008. Last year, our firefighters responded to a record 4,346 emergency medical calls, a 13 percent increase over 2007. Seven out of every 10 calls is an emergency medical call.

During the year, they successfully completed more than 35,000 hours of training, learning new techniques to help save lives. Our Fire Department also conducted almost 4,500 inspections in the past 12 months.

Community Development Department

Our Community Development, which oversees planning, zoning and land use, and ensures all construction work meets international building codes, also had a busy year. The department issued more than 3,300 building permits in 2008.

Our staff issued nearly 1,800 business license renewals and processed applications for more than 200 new businesses during the year. I realize that everyone's flood insurance premiums have increased since Katrina, but our work in flood plain management has helped reduce your premiums by 15 percent over the past several years. Last year alone, we saved Biloxi's 7,000 flood policy holders more than \$485,000. And we're looking to save you another 5 percent in the coming year.

Our federal programs division worked with Back Bay Mission to invest more than \$100,000 to restore storm-damaged homes last year, and shortly before the year ended we added another \$200,000 to build on the success of that program.

Federal money is also funding the \$2.8 million rebuilding of Howard Avenue in east Biloxi.

Parks & Recreation Department

In our Parks and Recreation, I am relieved to report to you that we have paved the parking lot at the Biloxi Sports Complex. I appreciate your patience on this.

We completed repairs at the Biloxi Natatorium, and we also opened a new facility to serve east Biloxi, the Mercy Cross Recreation Center. I want to thank the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi for helping make the Mercy Cross center happen. Our free recreation programs continue to offer a significant savings to Biloxi families.

FEMA, MEMA funding fuels recovery in Biloxi

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency have worked with local leaders in the city of Biloxi in recovery and rebuilding since Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2005.

"These federal grant programs are critical in the recovery and rebuilding process," said MEMA Director Mike Womack. "Without these programs and the hard work from our local and federal partners rebuilding our communities would be impossible."

"We have a great working relationship with Mayor Holloway and the city of Biloxi," said Alec Watson, acting director of FEMA's Mississippi Transitional Recovery Office. "We look forward to continuing that relationship with the city as well as other communities in south Mississippi."

Individual Assistance

- FEMA has obligated a total of more than \$108 million to help families and individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina in Biloxi.
- At peak occupation, there were 2,339 occupied temporary housing units in Biloxi. There are now just 118 occupied units – a 95 percent decrease.
- In Biloxi, 273 families have relocated from FEMA temporary housing to Mississippi Cottages as part of the Mississippi Alternative Housing Program, which is administered by MEMA.

Public Assistance

- FEMA continues to assist in the reconstruction of hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, power stations, government facilities, and other public services that

will aid the recovery of the Gulf Coast.

- FEMA has obligated approximately \$589 million in PA funds for the following special rebuilding sectors in Biloxi:
 - Debris Removal – \$75.5 M
 - Emergency Protective Measures – \$7.8 M
 - Roads and Bridges – \$1.6 M
 - Public Buildings – \$103.6 M
 - Utilities – \$364.5 M
 - Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Other Facilities – \$35.9 M
 - MEMA disburses Public Assistance funds.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

- FEMA has obligated more than \$3.1 million for various Hazard Mitigation Grants Program (HMGP) projects in Biloxi.
- Some of the HMGP projects include:
 - HMGP planning grant – \$135,000 with a federal share of \$128,500.
 - Early warning sirens – \$226,138 with a federal share of \$214,832.
 - Wind retrofit upgrades to the Donal Snyder Center – \$32,363 with a federal share of \$30,745.
 - Generators – \$193,945 with a federal share of \$184,248.
 - Upgrades to fire stations – \$539,214 with a federal share of \$512,253.
 - Upgrades for Emergency Operations Center – \$1,969,800 with a federal share of \$1,871,310.
- MEMA, as designated by the Governor of Mississippi, administers the HMGP.

We deliver.

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Don't wait until a storm threatens or other big news happens to get vital information about your community. Get it now. Delivered directly to you and for free. Since Katrina, the city has e-mailed millions of storm-recovery updates to Biloxians and an audience around the globe. In fact, nearly a million Bmails were transmitted last year alone. Subscribers get information on a host of local issues and projects, as well as details about special meetings and events of community interest. These e-mails and the city website are your No. 1 source of information on all things Biloxi.

Visit the city's web site at biloxi.ms.us and click on "Bmail" on the left side of the screen. It takes only a few seconds to sign up, and you'll be in the loop – and in the know.



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