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HURRICANE KATRINA 20 YEARS LATER



Floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina cover streets on Aug. 30, 2005, in New Orleans. Much of the area was inundated as levees began to break and leak around Lake Pontchartrain. According to federal estimates, Katrina saw the third-highest death toll from a hurricane in recorded U.S. history. VINCENT LAFORET/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Lower Ninth Ward; remaining residents and nonprofits work to bring neighborhood back to life

Rick Jervis USA TODAY

NEW ORLEANS – Concrete steps still stand sentry over empty lots here in the Lower Ninth Ward, their houses long washed away. ● Overgrown lots outnumber grocery stores. Streets, once filled with the sounds of children playing or older folks playing dominoes, are mostly quiet, punctured occasionally by the sound of a distant lawn mower. ● “Wasn’t always like this,” said Harry Sims, 72, whose house, on aptly-named Flood Street, is ringed on three sides by empty lots. “Katrina chased them all away.”

It’s been 20 years since Hurricane Katrina roared ashore on the Gulf Coast on the morning of Aug. 29, 2005, and the federal levees failed across New Orleans, unleashing flood torrents across the city.

The Category 3 hurricane and the ensuing breached levees and floodwalls caused more than 1,300 deaths – many of them in the Lower Ninth Ward – and around \$200 billion in damages (adjusted for inflation), making it at the time the costliest hurricane ever to hit the U.S. The disaster still claims the third-highest death toll from a hurricane in recorded U.S. history, according to federal estimates.

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Harry Sims, 72, a longtime Lower Ninth Ward resident, helped rescue several people on his skiff during the floods. He built a new home on Flood Street using federal recovery funds, but there are empty lots all around him. “You can’t run from home,” he says. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

‘We were fighting for our lives. Literally’

Peoria native recalls tragedy of storm

Dave Eminian
Peoria Journal Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hurricane Katrina slips further into history on Aug. 23 with the 20th anniversary of its carnage along the Gulf Coast.

But the massive storm with winds that reached 174 mph, killed nearly 1,900 people and piled up billions in damage in Louisiana and Mississippi, will forever be present in Danny Grieves’ mind.

The coach who led Metamora High School to an IHSA Class 3A state championship in 2023 is coming out of retirement to return to Mississippi and coach with his son, Daniel, in the 2025-26 season.

But 20 years ago, both the Grieves men — who have the same first name but are not Jr. and Sr. — were there, in Gulfport, Mississippi, when Katrina made landfall just 18 miles away in Bay St. Louis.

Danny, the elder Grieves, was head coach at Gulfport High School at the time. His son, Daniel, was in seventh grade, a future star who would later lead St. Stanislaus Catholic School in Bay St. Louis to a state basketball championship in 2011.

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Retired Metamora Township High School boys basketball coach Danny Grieves was head coach at Gulfport High School in Mississippi in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina made landfall a few miles away. Grieves is headed back south to work as an assistant coach to his son Daniel, head coach at St. Stanislaus Catholic School in Bay St. Louis. MATT DAYHOFF/JOURNAL STAR

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