



The Sewerage & Water Board

OF NEW ORLEANS

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August 28, 2019

Dear Mayor Cantrell, Honorable Members of the New Orleans City Council, and Orleans Parish Delegation:

This report is delivered in accordance which Revised Statute 33:4091, Section F, which states: *“In addition to the other requirements of this Section, the board shall send a report, by electronic mail, to the members of the Orleans Parish legislative delegation and the members of the governing authority of Orleans Parish detailing the pumping and electrical power of its facilities and the available manpower no later than twenty-four hours prior to a hurricane entering the Gulf of Mexico as determined by the National Weather Service and no later than forty eight hours after a flood watch or warning or thunderstorm watch or warning is issued by the National Weather Service for any area of Orleans Parish.”*

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood watch at approximately 4:29 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 25, and a flash flood warning at approximately 3:47 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 26. This report covers the status of New Orleans’ drainage system and Sewerage and Water Board’s (SWBNO) operations during those two events.

Aug. 25, 2019: The anticipated precipitation Sunday did not materialize and did not warrant SWBNO’s full operational response. Drainage pump stations were staffed at appropriate regular levels and SWBNO had all its power-generation equipment and 119 of 120 pumps available for service. The one drainage pump under repair is located at Drainage Pump Station (DPS) 14 on Lake Pontchartrain at Jahncke Road and Hayne Boulevard in New Orleans East.

Aug. 26, 2019: New Orleans witnessed an unpredicted, popup rainstorm that dropped as much as five inches of rain in specific neighborhoods: namely Broadmoor, Lower Garden District, CBD, Lower 9th Ward and Algiers Point.

The heaviest rain fell between approximately 1:45 and 4 p.m.

Overall, the drainage pumps and power supply responded as expected. As with all rain events, however, there were incidents that required further investigation. The following results are preliminary, based on initial after-action findings.

Starting around 3:23 p.m., four drainage pumps at DPS 1 in Broadmoor were running, but operators began to experience delays in loading the next sequence of pumps. Supervisors arrived shortly thereafter and aided the staff on duty to load additional pumps. By 3:55 p.m., all pumps that could run without overtopping the downstream canal were running.

A large pump at DPS 2 on the Lafitte Greenway tripped out of service around 4:25 p.m., well after the flooding had occurred. Operators restarted the pump but did not return it to service because the canal level already was too low to add another pump to the effort.

Despite little to no challenges to the pumps and the power supply, storm water inundated major thoroughfares in the downtown area that drains to DPS 2. SWBNO is actively inspecting the underground canals in that area for any possible obstructions.

Uptown also experienced sustained flooding. SWBNO launched an investigation of the drainage network in that area after the July 10 flood event. Those results, which may be available by the end of September, should provide some insight into the impact of the Aug. 26 rain, too.

Of New Orleans' 24 drainage pumping stations, some are staffed, some run remotely and some are staffed as circumstances dictate. Staffing levels were normal, as the intensity of Aug. 26 rain event was unanticipated. Operations leadership will further review the utility's response to determine whether any changes to regular staffing levels are necessary going forward.