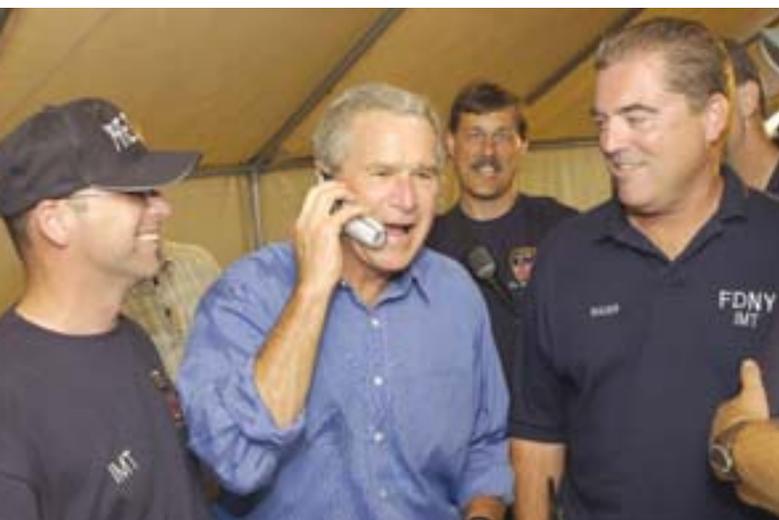




photo by Chief Chris E. Mickal, New Orleans Fire Department Photo Unit

# FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS



**O**n September 4, 2005, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the FDNY received a phone call from the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM), requesting FDNY resources be deployed to the state of Louisiana. Within 24 hours, 324 members of the Department were en route to New Orleans, an activation authorized under a mutual-aid agreement between states titled Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). This initial deployment was followed by additional manpower rotations, with a total commitment of more than 650 members during a six-week mission to provide critical assistance to the New Orleans Fire Department. Primarily, FDNY members conducted fire suppression and search and rescue operations. This deployment was the most extensive operation ever undertaken by the Department outside the confines of New York City.

## *The Response*

The initial deployment had two contingents. One was a firefighting force of 300 Firefighters and Officers. The second was 24 members of the FDNY Incident Management Team (IMT). This was FDNY's first deployment of IMTs and proved crucial to FDNY's successful operations in New Orleans. Prior to 9/11, FDNY had only limited experience with events requiring multi-operational periods and complex inter-agency operations. FDNY members were well-trained in the details of the ICS and well-schooled in working cooperatively with other agencies. One hundred members have been training specifically for an assignment such as this--running a large-scale incident for an extended period of time.

In addition to the deployment of Firefighters and EMS personnel, a convoy of vehicles and personnel was sent to provide support and logistics. The convoy was comprised of the Mobile Command Vehicle staffed with fire dispatchers, a fleet maintenance vehicle staffed with mechanics, six Battalion vans staffed with Firefighters and a step van filled with supplies. The pumper that was donated to the New York City Fire Department after 9/11--called the *Spirit of Louisiana*--also was part of the convoy.

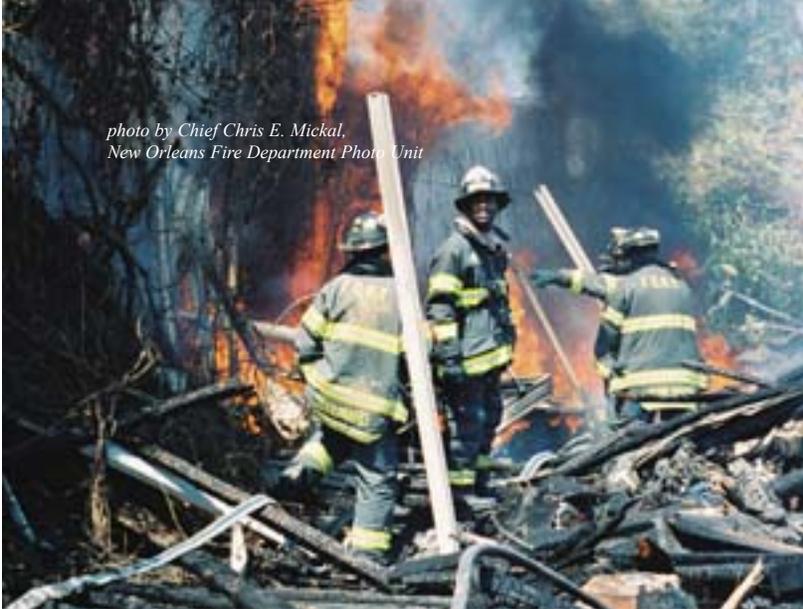
Each FDNY member got an eyeful of the horrendous conditions that existed in the city during the 15-mile bus trip to the designated staging area at the College of Our Lady of the Holy

### HERE IS A SUMMARY OF FIRE RESPONSE

#### DURING FISCAL YEAR 2006, COMPARED TO FISCAL YEAR 2005:

- ◆ 28,372 structural fires in 2006; a 2.8 percent increase from 27,610 structural fires in 2005.
- ◆ Average response time to structural fires was four minutes and 32 seconds in 2006, essentially unchanged from the four minutes and 31 seconds in 2005.
- ◆ 22,214 non-structural fires in 2006; a 12 percent decrease compared to 21,519 non-structural fires in 2005.
- ◆ Average response time to non-structural fires was five minutes and one second in 2006; one second less than in 2005.

photo by Chief Chris E. Mickal,  
New Orleans Fire Department Photo Unit



Cross. Many roads were impassible, debris was everywhere and heavily armed police checkpoints were at every major intersection. Initial security at Base Camp was provided by a group of Louisiana probation officers. The FDNY was assigned a contingent from the Texas National Guard to protect the facility and escort the five task forces that were established to respond into the city. On the third day of the FDNY deployment, a 30-man contingent of the U.S. Army's First Cavalry Division assumed command of security for the now-900-person camp. Other members of the military and law enforcement agencies helped to ensure a more secure working environment for Firefighters, whether at the Base Camp or fighting fires.

### **The Objectives**

Chiefs of the NOFD and the Command Staff of the FDNY IMT set the following objectives:

- Provide for Firefighter and community safety.
- Provide the community with fire and emergency services.
- Establish a functional Fire/Emergency response system.
- Establish a Fire/Command support structure.

The FDNY IMT was responsible for the operation of all activities of the Base Camp. At the height of the operation, it included logistical support for more than 1400 people. All deliveries had to be received, categorized, stored and/or delivered to fire department facilities throughout the city. The IMT also was responsible for feeding, sanitary needs, garbage removal and the

living/sleeping arrangements for all personnel.

New hazards developed day by day. Some of the safety issues that were addressed included downed and energized electrical wires and downed trees, natural gas leaks, alligators and poisonous snakes, contaminated water and dust, exposure to sun, delayed notifications of fires and communications, hazardous materials and chemical spills and helicopters landing and taking off and helicopter water drops.

On their "off" tours, Firefighters averaged 12 to 14 hours a day working Camp duty--cutting fallen trees, clearing debris and stocking supplies and equipment. With virtually no tools or supplies, FDNY members went to the NOFD Firefighters' homes (80 percent of which were decimated by the hurricane) for debris removal and minor repairs. The operation became more sophisticated as tools and chainsaws were delivered and plywood and tarps appropriated. This *Operation Chainsaw* continued throughout the FDNY deployment to New Orleans, with cleanup efforts conducted in more than 320 Firefighters' houses.

During the six-week deployment, FDNY members responded to approximately 850 incidents and extinguished 115 structural fires. Non-structural incidents included response for searches and medical, haz-mat and gas/water/electrical emergencies.

Part of the FDNY's legacy following deployment in response to Hurricane Katrina is that the NOFD has established a Safety Command within its department. A Safety Officer now is assigned with an Incident Commander to respond to all alarms.

### **McKinsey & Company Recommendations**

Every one of these five major recommendations played a key role in the success of FDNY's deployment to New Orleans.

1. Expand the Incident Command System--ICS--to provide a stronger foundation for responding to and managing any kind of fire or emergency.
2. Create Incident Management Teams that are extensively trained in the principles of ICS, enabling them to manage large and complex incidents.
3. Expand the capabilities of the Fire Department's Operations Center--FDOC--to direct the Department's response to major disasters.
4. Develop protocols for staging, recall and mutual aid.
5. Continue with FDNY-NYPD liaisons, a new program undertaken by the Fire and Police Commissioners.

