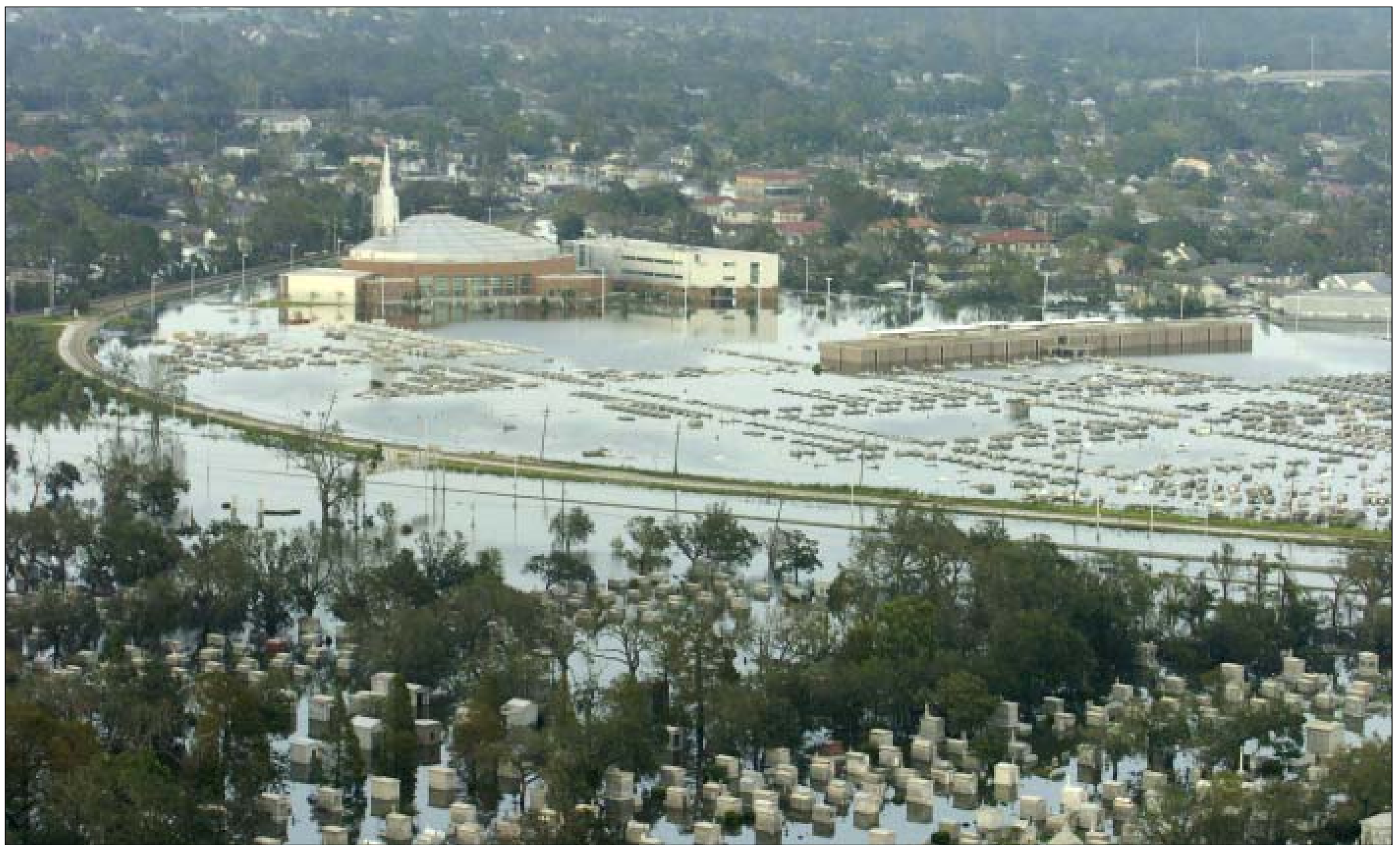




# UNDER WATER

LEVEE BREACH SWAMPS CITY FROM LAKE TO RIVER

**Population urged to leave; years of cleanup ahead**



STAFF PHOTO BY TED JACKSON

NEW ORLEANS: Graves at Greenwood and Metairie cemeteries mark the waterline of the sheet of water that covered the city from Lake Pontchartrain to nearly the French Quarter on Tuesday.

## Daylong efforts to repair levee fail

By Dan Shea  
Staff writer

New Orleans became an unimaginable scene of water, fear and suffering Tuesday after a levee breach in the 17th Street Canal sent billions of gallons of Lake Pontchartrain coursing through the city.

As the day wore on, the only dry land was a narrow band from the French Quarter and parts of Uptown, the same small strip that was settled by Bienville amid the swamps.

On Tuesday night, it appeared the city was returning to swamp when a daylong effort to shore the levee near the Hammond Highway failed. Mayor Ray Nagin said pumps were being overwhelmed and warned that a new deluge would bury the city in up to 15 feet of water.

With solid water from the lake to the French Quarter, the inundation and depopulation of an entire American city was at hand.

"Truth to tell, we're not far from filling in the bowl," said Terry Ebbert, the city's director of homeland security. The waters were still rising at 3 inches per hour, and eventually could move close to the French Quarter levee.

Although the breach occurred on the Orleans side of the canal, it did not spare the Jefferson side. Water found its way into much of the east bank, meeting the flow that came in

from the west from Hurricane Katrina's storm surge Monday.

An accurate tally of death was hard to determine. Five deaths related to Katrina have been confirmed in Jefferson Parish, officials said. There also are seven people missing who decided to ride out Katrina on Grand Isle.

Gov. Kathleen Blanco spoke of "many deaths," but there were only rumors and anecdotes of firefighters tying floating bodies to trees.

"We have some bodies floating," Ebbert said. "Not like thousands, but we have seen some."

As to the living, with the absence of cars and electric motors in the powerless city, a sad tableau played itself out in an eerie quiet.

All day, a weary army of storm victims trudged through waist-deep muddy water toward the Superdome, where more than 20,000 people took refuge. The next problem is what to do with them. Late Tuesday Gov. Blanco ordered them out, saying the facility was too damaged to house

people and the atmosphere too dangerous. Officials said the National Guard soon would begin driving them out to dry ground, then airlift them out of southeast Louisiana.

In other areas, lawlessness took hold.

See **KATRINA**, A-2



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX BRANDON

MID-CITY: A New Orleans Police officer ferries refugees out of the danger zone as floodwaters rose Tuesday.

*Flooding will only get worse*

By Mark Schleifstein  
Staff writer

The catastrophic flooding that filled the bowl that is New Orleans on

Monday and Tuesday will only get worse over the next few days because

rainfall from Hurricane Katrina continues to flow into Lake Pontchartrain from north shore rivers and streams, and east winds and a 17.5-foot storm crest on the Pearl River block the outflow water through the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass.

The lake is normally 1 foot above sea level, while the city of New Orleans is an average of 6 feet below sea level. But a combination of storm surge and rainfall from Katrina have raised the lake's surface to 6 feet above sea level, or more.

All of that water moving from the lake has found several holes in the lake's banks - all pouring into New Orleans. Water that crossed St. Charles Parish in an area where the lakefront levee has not yet been completed, and that backed up from the lake in Jefferson Parish canals, is funneling into Kenner and Metairie.

A 500-yard and growing breach in the eastern wall of the 17th Street Canal separating New Orleans from Metairie is pouring hundreds of thousands of gallons of lake water per second into the New Orleans

See **WATER**, A-4