

## AbstractID: 7725 Title: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina

**Purpose:** To outline the lessons taught by Hurricane Katrina during the evacuation, cleanup, and rebuilding phases of a radiation oncology center in the hope that others may benefit from our experiences in formulating their own disaster and recovery plans.

**Method and Materials:** Hurricane Katrina flooded 80% of the city of New Orleans including our radiation oncology department. Procedures developed prior to the storm to ensure communication among staff and patients, to minimize loss of patient and physics/dosimetry data, and to expedite recovery were put to the test.

**Results:** Several unexpected situations arose during the evacuation, cleanup, and rebuilding phases: cell phone service was interrupted for several weeks and hospital email servers were down for months; most surviving patient and physics data were found to be remote electronic backups; securing of radioisotope sources was hampered by the loss of safe keys and the lack of functioning elevators; many patients were unable to relate their diagnoses and treatment histories to their new care providers; further equipment and data loss occurred after the primary catastrophe; vendor maintenance agreements greatly decreased replacement costs of replacement computer systems; the pace of rebuilding was slowed by external influences; and extra training was required after the long closure.

**Conclusion:** Even the most careful planning cannot account for the unexpected. But because of careful planning, both pre- and post-Katrina, our flooded radiation oncology department reopened in November 2006 and remains the only flooded radiation facility to do so 18+ months after Katrina. Most of the unforeseen situations encountered can now be planned for in future disaster and recovery plans.

**Conflict of Interest (only if applicable):**