

City's Recovery Nearly Lost in the Shuffle

When Hurricane Katrina struck, bringing with it widespread flooding and damage, the City of Slidell took the brunt of the storm. Located just 30 miles north of New Orleans, the two cities were both hit full-force by the destructive power of the hurricane. Unfortunately for Slidell, the nation first focused on the recovery of New Orleans. The City of Slidell didn't begin its recovery operations until Adjusters International had been hired, bringing the expertise required to turn the recovery process around.



DESCRIPTION

A lack of adequate resources caused the situation to unfold the way it did in Slidell. Due to overburdened FEMA officials and insurance company adjusters, a number of projects were overlooked or underestimated.

ISSUES

City Right of Way (ROW) areas clogged with storm debris were first deemed ineligible for funding, and then they were assessed incompletely.

Despite the presence of raw sewage in the streets, caused by backed up and clogged sewer systems, there was no project approved for the cleanup of the city's sewers.

The city's insurance company made an initial offer of \$250,000 for wind-related damage to properties throughout the city, an assessment that Adjusters International's insurance professionals found inadequate.

A primary pump station at the Schneider Canal was damaged and, prior to Adjusters International's

CONTINUED ...

City's Recovery Nearly Lost in the Shuffle



involvement, initial funding for the repair was only about \$700,000. Adjusters International reviewed the Schneider Canal project and identified major areas that were not documented, such as temporary bypass pumps, a lack of mitigation measures included in the project, and major damage to submerged pumps.

SOLUTIONS APPLIED

Adjusters International first had the challenge of getting FEMA officials to reconsider their position that ROW debris removal could not be funded. When FEMA officials agreed to assess the damage, numerous areas of the city were overlooked. Adjusters International brought the officials back for additional assessments, in the end doubling the project's funding from just over \$2 million to more than \$4 million.

With patience and persistence, and numerous letters sent to state and FEMA officials, Adjusters International detailed the necessity for a cleaning project across all flooded areas of Slidell. Seventy percent of the City had been flooded and contaminated by sewage. FEMA eventually funded the cleanup. The project also included cleaning the sewer system.

Adjusters International reopened the insurance claim to make corrections to the insurance company's scope of damage, reevaluate the pricing methodology and renegotiate coinsurance issues. Adjusters International also assisted Slidell in presenting proof to their insurer that a more accurate assessment for wind damage would be \$5 million.

Adjusters International prepared two rounds of position papers to FEMA officials to reconsider the Schneider Canal project, adding to the project \$400,000 for a temporary pump, \$2.1 million in additional mechanical and site repairs, and \$2.8 million for mitigation measure.

OUTCOME

Adjusters International's ability to assist in the disaster recovery process is highlighted by these experiences in the City of Slidell. Time and again Adjusters International was able to reverse the course of projects rejected for funding, and exponentially increased funding for other projects. The insurance claim was proven to be 20 times greater after Adjusters International's professional assessment, and in just one project, federal funding jumped from \$700,000 to nearly \$5 million. Overall, Adjusters International assisted with more than 120 projects, bringing \$50 million in federal funding to the nearly forgotten City.

“...The City of Slidell credits ... Adjusters International to be an integral part of Slidell's emergence as better and stronger than ever and I strongly recommend to any community affected by a disaster to obtain Adjusters International's services. ...”

*Ben O. Morris
Mayor
Slidell, Louisiana*