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Comprehensive New Study Reveals Updated Population Numbers in Storm-Affected Parishes

Survey done in conjunction with U.S. Census Bureau and CDC

BATON ROUGE, La. (October 5, 2006) – The results of a new door-to-door survey of people living in Orleans Parish estimated the population to be 187,525 residents, as of August 2006. The study, done with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Census Bureau, is the first of its kind since hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005. As of August 2006, the survey estimated Jefferson Parish had 435,786 residents, Plaquemines Parish had 20,024 residents and St. Bernard Parish had 25,016 residents.

When compared with population numbers from the July 2005 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, results of the survey showed:

Orleans Parish: 187,525 residents (+/-11.5% MOE*) compared to 454,863 residents
Jefferson Parish: 435,786 residents (+/-12.7% MOE*) compared to 452,824 residents
Plaquemines Parish: 20,024 residents (+/-36.3% MOE*) compared to 28,995 residents
St Bernard Parish: 25,016 residents (+/-17.0% MOE*) compared to 65,364 residents
St. Tammany Parish: Survey in progress; compared to 220,295 residents

*MOE = Margin of Error

The comprehensive household survey was conducted by the Louisiana Public Health Institute on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA). Work began in June with technical assistance provided by the CDC and the U.S. Census Bureau.

"We were pleased to join the state of Louisiana in this substantial undertaking," said Alden Henderson, chief of the Health Investigations Branch at CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

"We used a Census Bureau method to select neighborhoods, housing units and individuals to survey. We adapted this method to address the unique challenges facing the New Orleans area following Hurricane Katrina," Henderson said.

The CDC assisted by helping to train the surveyors, design the survey protocol, determine when and how to revisit households and how to capture the data. Like the decennial census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, it does not include those who commute into the city. In addition, the survey does not include institutionalized populations such as prisons and dormitories and has no projection of those that plan to return.

According to Louisiana Health and Hospitals Secretary Dr. Fred Cerise, the goal of the project is to provide critical population data to aid in decision-making and planning.

"In order to best plan and allocate public service resources and disaster recovery funds it is critical to have accurate population and demographic data. This information is also crucial for the creation of evacuation and preparation guidelines for future emergency response activities," Cerise explained.

"We recently completed a study on deaths in Orleans Parish. But, measuring today's information against pre-Katrina data was difficult because there were not accurate population figures. This was also true as we studied the number of health care providers needed to treat people after the storms. Now, this survey will enable us to make better decisions," he said.

The accurate population estimates can help local planners best understand the current demographics of their community as they decide where schools, health clinics, transportation and other public services may be needed.

Known officially as the 2006 Louisiana Health and Population Survey, the project employs a standard U.S. Census Bureau method for conducting population estimates, with modifications made to these methods to account for the effects of the 2005 hurricane season.

"The survey methodology was developed with advice from technical experts on population surveys at the CDC and the Census Bureau," said David Bowman, lead researcher with the LRA. "This allows us to make precise, valid comparisons between these results and those from previous Census reports."

Provisional reports for the four initial parishes are available online at www.popest.org. This includes data on population, racial and age demographics.

In addition to the four initial parishes, survey teams have also been working in Calcasieu, Cameron and St. Tammany Parishes. Results for these areas are expected later this month. It is

anticipated that reports will be issued for a total of 18 parishes in South and Central Louisiana by the end of 2006.

Funding for the 2006 Louisiana Health and Population Survey was from the CDC, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals - Office of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control Foundation.

The survey process began in June of this year, when survey teams visited neighborhoods and left behind survey information packets on doors. The packets included instructions, the survey form and a letter from Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and Dr. Cerise. The letter explained the project and its importance. The teams later returned to the homes where packets had been left in order to survey residents in person.

Throughout the process, survey team members wore project t-shirts and carried official badges identifying them as members of 2006 Louisiana Health and Population Survey team.

To discuss the methodology, reporters should contact Dr. Henderson from the CDC at (404) 498-0070.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated South Louisiana, destroying more than 200,000 homes and 18,000 businesses. The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) is the planning and coordinating body that was created in the aftermath of these storms by Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco to lead one of the most extensive rebuilding efforts in the world. The LRA is a 33-member body which is coordinating across jurisdictions, supporting community recovery and resurgence, ensuring integrity and effectiveness, and planning for the recovery and rebuilding of Louisiana.

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