

September marks twenty years since Hurricane Katrina reshaped our state. The storm was devastating in its scale, but it also revealed a critical truth: emergency management cannot succeed without the private sector at the table.

In 2005, the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center didn't exist. Businesses were not formally integrated into the state's response framework, and recovery was slower and more painful because of it. But Katrina also planted the seeds of change. Today, the LABEOC stands as a bridge between government and business, ensuring resources, information, and support flow both ways.

Here are five lessons from Katrina that continue to guide Louisiana's business community:

1. Preparedness Is Everyone's Responsibility

When Katrina struck, many organizations, public and private, assumed others would fill the gaps. The lesson is clear: every business must own its readiness. Continuity planning, employee preparedness, and clear communication cannot be left to chance or to someone else.

2. Coordination Beats Isolation

During Katrina, fragmented efforts slowed recovery. Today, we know that coordination is force-multiplication. Partnerships with local emergency managers, chambers of commerce, and the LABEOC give businesses a direct line into decision-making and situational awareness.

3. Supply Chains Are as Critical as Power and Water

Katrina exposed just how fragile supply networks can be when roads close, fuel runs short, or warehouses flood. Businesses learned that vendor diversity, local sourcing, and pre-negotiated alternatives can make the difference between reopening in days or in months.

4. People Come Before Property

Buildings can be repaired; people cannot. Katrina showed us the human cost of poor planning, employees displaced, families unprepared, and communities fractured. Today, smart businesses recognize that supporting employees and family preparedness is a business strategy, not a perk.

5. Partnership Pays Off

Perhaps the most enduring lesson is that no sector can carry the load alone. Government brings resources, businesses bring capability, and communities bring resilience. Together, recovery is faster, stronger, and more complete. The very existence of the LABEOC is proof of this hard-earned truth.

Final Thought

As we honor those lost and remember the hardships of 2005, let's also recognize the progress we've made. Two decades later, Louisiana is not only better prepared, but we are also better connected. That connection is Katrina's legacy, and it's one we must continue to strengthen.

Jim

Preparedness Pays: Treat Readiness Like a Business Investment

As September's National Preparedness Month arrives, Louisiana's rhythms are already in full swing; schools are back in session, Friday night football has returned, as has college football across the state, roads are a little busier, and hurricane season is still very real. It's the perfect moment to say this plainly: preparedness isn't a line item; it's an investment. It protects your people, your reputation, and your bottom line. Preparedness is not a "one and done" event. It's a posture. It's a mindset.

Preparedness shows up where it matters:

- **Continuity of revenue:** Shorter downtime means fewer lost sales and stronger customer trust.
- **Workforce stability:** Employees with family plans return faster and with less stress.
- **Smarter cost control:** Pre-negotiated vendors and backup power prevent surge pricing and "panic buys."
- **Regulatory & contract readiness:** Some partners demand continuity plans; having one keeps you eligible.

Think of it like maintenance on a fleet truck: you can pay a little now for oil and filters—or a lot later for a seized engine.

People First: When Families Are Ready, Businesses Reopen Faster

We say this often because it's true: **your people are your plan**. Encourage every employee to complete a simple home checklist:

- Evacuation route + shelter plan (including pets and medications)
- Three days of supplies; a week is better
- Printed copies of essential documents and phone numbers
- A backup way to get paid (direct deposit confirmed; paper check fallback)
- A "who covers me" note at work, so responsibilities don't stall

When families are safe and communications are clear, employees can focus on safely returning to work.

The 90-Minute Preparedness Sprint (use it this week)

You don't need a marathon to make a difference. Block **90 minutes** and knock out the following:

1. **Call-Down Drill (30 min):** Reach 10% of staff at random. Record time-to-contact and accuracy. Fix bad numbers today.
2. **Data Restore Test (30 min):** Restore one critical file from backup to a clean machine. If it fails or takes too long, escalate and address.
3. **Generator/UPS Reality Check (30 min):** Start the generator, confirm automatic transfer, and verify UPS runtime for network gear. Document fuel vendor and delivery window.

Repeat monthly. Track your times. What gets measured gets better.

Continuity Checklist (no fluff, just essentials)

1. **Leadership & roles:** Two-deep for every critical function; name the backups.
2. **Communications:** Text + phone tree + out-of-band channel (e.g., messaging app). One page of "who to call when X happens."
3. **Facilities & power:** Generator tested under load; fuel contract on file; key spares stocked (belts, filters, extension cords).
4. **Vendors & supply:** Primary/secondary suppliers listed with account numbers; purchase thresholds pre-approved for emergencies.
5. **Finance & payroll:** Direct deposit verified; emergency check run process documented; continuity for AP/AR.
6. **Data & cyber:** MFA on all accounts; **3-2-1 backups** (3 copies, 2 media, 1 offsite/offline); incident-response contacts posted.
7. **Insurance & documentation:** Policy numbers, carrier contacts, and claims steps printed and stored offsite.
8. **Cyber Is Part of the Storm**

Disasters today don't separate "natural" and "digital." Do these four things now:

1. Turn on **MFA** for email, payroll, banking, and file sharing.
2. Confirm **offline backups** (immutable if available) and a written restore playbook.
3. Run a 10-minute **phishing refresher** in your next team huddle: "Hover, verify, never rush."
4. Pre-stage a **cyber incident phone tree:** IT lead, MSP, insurer, legal, communications.

Metrics That Matter (track these like sales)

- **Time to account for staff** (goal: under 2 hours for Tier-1 teams)

- **RTO for critical apps** (how fast can you function, even in “manual mode”)
- **Generator start success rate** (first-start every test)
- **Contact accuracy** (% of employees with verified cell, email, and emergency contact)

Small, visible wins build a culture that endures.

Quick Wins You Can Claim This Month

- **Add a wallet-card:** Front: emergency numbers; back: “If X happens, I do Y.” Hand it out at shift change.
- **Post a one-page plan at the time clock:** Who to call, where to go, what to bring.
- **Stage a “go bin”** with extension cords, flashlights, headlamps, batteries, painter’s tape, zip ties, permanent markers, and paper forms.
- **Train one backup** for your payroll run and one backup for your vendor ordering system.

Closing the Loop

Business leaders don’t control the weather, but they do control resilience. Investing in preparedness safeguards your people, stabilizes your operations, and strengthens Louisiana’s resilience. Safety starts with awareness, and resilience keeps the doors open.

Jim



James 'Jim' Williams, Public-Private Partnership Operations Officer
 NIMSAT Institute
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette
james.williams@louisiana.edu
[337.482.0633](tel:337.482.0633)



Greetings from the NIMSAT Institute!

Preparedness Starts at Home and at Work

Each September, FEMA leads the nation in recognizing National Preparedness Month - a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the importance of readiness for disasters and emergencies. This year’s theme, “**Preparedness Starts at Home,**” emphasizes that the most effective preparedness begins with simple steps taken by families, individuals, and businesses.

Disasters can disrupt lives and livelihoods in an instant. While families face risks to their safety and homes, businesses face threats to their employees, operations, and supply chains. Taking time now to prepare ensures that both households and businesses can recover more quickly and reduce the impact of unexpected events.

FEMA’s Key Preparedness Recommendations for September:

For Families:

1. **Make a Plan** – Establish how your family will communicate and where you will meet in the event of an emergency. Don’t forget children, older adults, and pets.
2. **Build an Emergency Kit** – Include water, food, flashlights, medications, and essential documents in a waterproof container.
3. **Know Your Risks** – Learn about the most likely hazards in your area and sign up for local emergency alerts.

For Businesses:

1. **Develop a Business Continuity Plan** – Identify essential functions, designate backups for key staff, and plan for supply chain disruptions.
2. **Protect Critical Data and Systems** – Ensure essential files are backed up and accessible off-site. Consider cyber preparedness alongside physical safety.
3. **Engage Employees** – Train staff on evacuation routes, shelter-in-place procedures, and emergency roles. Encourage employees to prepare their families at home so they can return to work more quickly after a disaster.
4. **Coordinate with Partners** – Connect with local emergency management, industry associations, and the [Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center \(LABEOC\)](#) to strengthen resilience and resource-sharing before a disaster occurs.

Preparedness is not a one-time task but an ongoing process. Families and businesses that take small, steady steps today are more resilient, safer, and better equipped to recover quickly when the unexpected happens.

For toolkits, checklists, and training resources for both households and businesses, visit ready.gov/September. This September, take action —because **Preparedness Starts at Home, and at Work.**

As always, stay prepared and stay safe!

Shannon



Shannon Strother, PhD, Director
NIMSAT Institute
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
shannon.strother@louisiana.edu
[337.482.0609](tel:337.482.0609)

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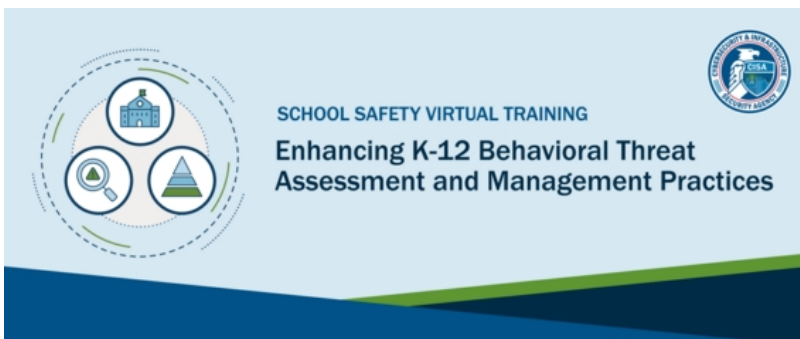


The GOHSEP Academy, in partnership with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Association, offers public training courses. These courses cover a variety of topics that enhance processes essential for community efficiency and resilience.

We encourage you to share these upcoming training opportunities with relevant partners and stakeholders to help build and maintain capabilities within your communities.

[To register and view the schedule, please visit the GOHSEP STEMS Portal.](#)

If you have any questions or need to report cancellations, feel free to contact Trevis.Thompson@la.gov.



Please join the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) School Safety on Thursday, October 16, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. EDT for a [virtual training](#) on enhancing behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) practices in kindergarten through 12th-grade (K-12) schools.

Behavioral threat assessment is a critical component of school safety, helping to identify and address concerning behaviors before they escalate to crises. This session will explore how K-12 leaders can build and strengthen BTAM processes that promote early intervention and prevent school violence, especially when embedded within a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports. A panel of experts will share

strategies for forming an effective BTAM team, defining roles, and fostering collaboration among school staff, mental health professionals, and law enforcement partners.

Event Details

- **When:** October 16, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. EDT
- **Where:** Microsoft Teams Live (*access link to be provided to registrants one day in advance of the event*)
- **Registration:** [K12ThreatAssessment.eventbrite.com](https://k12threatassessment.eventbrite.com) [Register Here](#)

Now is the best time to prepare!

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The LABEOC is managed by the [National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies Institute](#) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in partnership with the [Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness](#) and [Louisiana Economic Development](#).