

# Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina

**M. Glantz**

Senior Scientist, (1) Center for Capacity Building, (2) National Center for Atmospheric Research (3) PO Box 3000 (4) Boulder, Colorado USA (glantz@ucar.edu, Fax: 303-497-8125)

Hurricane Katrina produced one of the most devastating, costly hurricanes in American history (over \$250 billion US). The impacts on human life and on infrastructure are major, long term and have changed the nature of a major coastal urban icon, the city of New Orleans that had survived for more than three centuries precariously perched on a hurricane-prone coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Katrina was not just another severe tropical storm in the midst of a very active hurricane season. It was one that had tremendous political implications for the loss of credibility and reliability of the Administration of President Bush, once seen as caring and politically invincible. Hurricane Katrina exposed many shortcomings of American leaders to respond to a major climate-related catastrophe. This situation exposed to the world's publics what can be called "myths" such as the belief that developing countries are more at risk to climate change impacts than industrialized ones. Another myth relates to references to Katrina's impacts as a 'natural disaster'. Interestingly, a mock hurricane-related disaster 'dry-run' scenario had been undertaken a year earlier called "Hurricane Pam": this was a scenario of a moderate hurricane directly hitting the city of New Orleans. All government agencies were involved in the exercise from local to global, and held a press conference to boast about their preparations. Yet, only one year later, most agencies responded poorly, even though a perfect landfall forecast had been in their hands about 60 hours in advance. An objective review of this situation exposes many lessons to be identified and hopefully learned (if applied) for all countries about extreme event. It is much more than just a local case study: It is one with global implications about mitigation and adaptation tactics and strategies for coping with foreseeable as well as surprising aspects of global warming.