

Storm Veterans Overseeing Campus Repairs

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Through howling winds and intermittent rain, a skeleton crew of essential university employees weathered Hurricane Gustav directly from Tulane University campuses. Less than 24 hours after the hurricane's passing, those crews confirm only minor damage to university property, and power was restored to the uptown campus on Wednesday morning (Sept. 3).



Chain saw in hand, Tom Armitage (in blue shirt) leads a work crew clearing debris in front of Gibson Hall on the uptown campus. Armitage is superintendent of grounds at Tulane. (Photos by Zack Weaver)

"By and large we have only minor damage," said Tony Lorino, Tulane University chief financial officer and one of the essential employees who stayed on the uptown campus as the storm passed.

Lorino was joined on the uptown campus on Wednesday morning by Tulane President Scott Cowen and Yvette Jones, senior vice president for external affairs and chief operating officer, who flew into New Orleans from the administrators'

evacuation headquarters in Nashville.

Lorino said the storm's power was less than originally expected. "The weather was very sporadic during the hurricane's passing. There was a lot of wind and some rain," he added. "We did not get as much rain as we thought we might, and we never actually had any standing water on campus."

Storm damages were light for both the uptown and downtown campuses, as well as the Tulane National Primate Research Center in Covington, La. On the uptown campus, Lorino said, "We probably have a half-dozen broken windows, some missing roof tiles and a lot of debris from trees, so its really not that bad and it's far less than what we saw after Hurricane Katrina."



Workers remove tree limbs in Gibson Circle that were downed by Hurricane Gustav. The scaffolding at left surrounding Tilton Hall is from a roofing project that was under way before the storm struck.

With little damage sustained, university officials are planning for staff and students to be back on campus this weekend with students returning to the dorms on Sunday (Sept. 7) and resuming classes on Monday (Sept. 8).

According to Lorino, the team of employees who rode out the storm are positioned to ensure the security of campus buildings and to relay storm-related damage assessments as quickly as possible.

“The group is primarily made up of personnel from the (Tulane) police department and facilities services.” Lorino said. “Teams remained on the [uptown](#) and [downtown](#) campuses as well as the [primate center](#) during the storm.”

With approximately one dozen facilities services employees in the city and another half-dozen who have returned since the storm moved away from the New Orleans area, cleanup has already begun. Although campuses are still without the full complement of police and facilities employees, they will continue working throughout the week to clear away debris and make repairs where needed, he said.