

## Gustav Tests Hurricane Preparedness

September 05, 2008 1:00 PM Nick Marinello  
mr4@tulane.edu

Bringing tropical storm-strength winds to the New Orleans area, Hurricane Gustav saved its most abhorrent behavior for other parts of Louisiana, but provided enough of a thumping to test the university's emergency preparedness.



Greg Southworth, center, Tulane's emergency response director, takes time out on Thursday (Sept. 4) for a bite to eat in the Bruff Commons dining hall with Danny Lawless, director of public safety, left, and Cynthia Cherrey, vice president and dean of students. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"You always learn a lot during a response," said Greg Southworth, Tulane's [emergency response](#) director, "but overall things went pretty smoothly."

Southworth, along with Tony Lorino, senior vice president and chief financial officer, and Dr. Karen DeSalvo, associate professor of clinical medicine, rode out the storm in the campus "safehouse," an emergency command post built atop the university's power plant. The bunkered facility, built after Hurricane Katrina, is a key component of Tulane's hurricane response.

Southworth, Lorino and DeSalvo provided on-campus leadership while President Scott Cowen and his senior staff relocated Tulane administrative functions to Nashville, Tenn., the Sunday before the hurricane made landfall.

Also on campus during the storm were 29 officers from the Tulane Police Department and 12 staff members from facilities services.

For Southworth, who joined the university this year, Gustav presented the first challenge to and validation of his planning.

"This is my first time with Tulane and I am really impressed with everyone," said Southworth. "The guys from facilities services really worked hard during the storm, keeping the power plant running, the campus maintained" and then ? true New Orleanians ? they cooked dinner for themselves.

According to plans, the university disconnected from the city's power grid on Sunday (Aug. 31) afternoon, a day before Gustav's arrival, and switched over to campus generators before the city's power failed.

"We take the campus off the grid so there is not interruption in power," Southworth said. "The changes we made to the power plant allow us to power critical buildings on campus, such as Stern and Boggs, where there is critical research, as well as the vivarium."

"Gustav was a good test of our plan and our response here at Tulane," said Southworth, who added that Tulane administrators currently are monitoring Hurricane Ike. "There are some small things we need to improve on, but the main thing is that we got the students safely out of the city, with the evacuation to Jackson State going really well."