

**Remarks at Stennis Space Center**  
**NASA Exceptional Bravery Medal Presentation**  
**Shana Dale**  
**Deputy Administrator**  
**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**  
**March 3, 2006**

We gather today to celebrate and honor the extraordinary courage and devotion to duty of men and women who represent the finest qualities of this great agency. The story of your courageous response to America's greatest natural disaster, began on another Friday, one much more ominous than today. It was six months ago on Friday August 26<sup>th</sup> that the National Weather Service accurately predicted, with the aid of NASA satellites, that Hurricane Katrina would aim the ferocity of its wrath right at this section of the country. Indeed, Katrina's eye passed directly over the Stennis Space Center in the early morning hours of Monday, August 29<sup>th</sup>.

Today, although you are continuing to face much hardship, the recovery and renewal of this great region of the country is now underway. We know it will take a tremendous amount of time to recover, and that the path to recovery will be a difficult one. But because of the mettle that the men and women of Stennis have constantly displayed, we know you will triumph. You absorbed the worst of Katrina's blows when the hurricane made landfall. In the critical days following the storm you saved countless lives through your generous aid to people who sought shelter from the storm, and through your support for relief efforts based at Stennis that reached people in a six county area along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

We bestow today some of NASA's highest commendations—our Outstanding Public Service, Outstanding Leadership, Exceptional Achievement, and Group Achievement Awards—to the Stennis heroes of Katrina. These awards are all incredibly well-deserved.

Now we all know that numbers can sometimes numb the senses, but in this case the numbers help illuminate the enormity of what you faced and did during Katrina and its aftermath:

- 125 miles per hour winds was the peak storm intensity recorded in the vicinity of Stennis.
- 30 feet was the height of the storm surge in the nearby communities of Bay St. Louis and Waveland, the places many of you call home.

- 3,700 was the number of people including employees, their immediate and extended families, and members of the general public who sought shelter at Stennis. David told me that on a typical day, the cafeteria staff feeds about 175 breakfasts and 600 lunches. Well, on the day of Katrina and the ensuing 10 days they served 3,000 meals three times a day to service the needs of the people who were here.
- 20 was the number of special needs patients who received excellent assistance from the small staff of the Stennis Medical Clinic, the good people who provided medical care to all who needed it among the evacuees on-site.
- 7.6 million gallons of water, 41 million pounds of ice and 3.5 million meals-ready-to-eat were the number of supplies distributed to devastated areas via the Stennis Space Center hub after the folks at Stennis facilitated the use of the property to be the site of FEMA's Incident Command Center serving the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

There was no charge for people stranded at Stennis who wanted to get back to their families after the storm but didn't have a full tank of gas. The good Samaritans who managed the "Flee for Free" program were the staff of our Emergency Operations Center, led by Don Griffith.

Twenty-four is the number of voice lines leaving Stennis connected to the telephone switch at the Marshall Space Flight Center on the Thursday after the storm, thanks to some very creative work by our telecommunications team under the direction of Terry Bordelon.

For 10 days Stennis was used as a logistical base for helicopters to provide support in the form of food, water, and medical supplies to our colleagues at the Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans.

Vital equipment, to the tune of millions of dollars, was protected during the storm by employees in the Stennis rocket propulsion test complex. Our brave ride-out crew employed innovative methods to ensure an uninterrupted supply of purge gases to all required facility infrastructure and test hardware as Katrina passed through. Failure to protect this infrastructure would have required us to clean, purge, and recertify these facilities for Space Shuttle Main Engine and other propulsion system testing. So what your team accomplished was nothing less than saving America's space program from, quite literally, being grounded for years.

Today, because we are back in business, the employees of Stennis will help fuel the recovery of the Gulf Coast region by continuing the important work of *your* space program.

The country is indebted to you for your bravery, hard work and dedication in the face of severe distress. We are counting on you to continue providing the work on spacecraft propulsion that will enable us to keep the Space Shuttle flying and prepare us for the next great era of space exploration. We will rely on you to be at the forefront of this epic era, as we produce the Crew Exploration Vehicles and Heavy Lift Launch Vehicles to send our astronauts to the Moon and Mars. We are very much indebted to the wonderful men and women of Stennis for saving us from what could have been a huge detour for the nation's space program. So on behalf of the Administrator, I wish to extend my personal thanks to all of you who have demonstrated once again that not all of NASA's heroes fly in space. Thank you very much for your warm welcome today.