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LACK OF UTILITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS HAMPERING DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND EARLY RECOVERY EFFORTS IN TERREBONNE PARISH

Although utility providers and communication companies are working to restore water, sewer service, electricity, phone and internet service, damage assessment and recovery efforts in Terrebonne in the wake of Hurricane *Ida* are proceeding much slower than hoped as a result. Damage assessment reports that have been filed in the Emergency Operations Center today indicate substantial and wide-spread structure damage throughout the parish, particularly in Terrebonne's bayou communities. In these areas, damage to residences rendered about 60% of them unsafe for human habitation. In these areas road clearing efforts are underway.

The lack of water pressure, electricity, and blown out windows and roof damage have also forced the closure of hospitals in Terrebonne Parish. Patients in these facilities, some in intensive care units or on ventilators had to be evacuated to hospitals in Shreveport and Lafayette, Louisiana, as well as facilities in Mississippi and Texas. With the forced closure of these hospitals and others in the region, there is no way to treat trauma victims or even the elderly with medical issues that require hospitalization. The lack of medical facilities in the parish and region greatly complicates the return of evacuees to Terrebonne. There is no way to accurately predict the restoration and availability of utility service in the parish and when reentry may begin. Consequently, recovery, repair and restoration efforts in Terrebonne will take a great deal of time.

Terrebonne emergency support managers are also dealing with the need to shelter residents from substantially damaged homes in shelters that are themselves damaged. Assessments of the extent of damage to bridges and other critical transportation and utility facilities are underway during the daylight hours. First responders have reported structure fires that were allowed to burn out because of the lack of water pressure and a critical injury to a police officer as a result of a traffic accident required transportation to a hospital two hours away for treatment. Without electricity to power traffic signals, travel through these intersections is very dangerous.

"Terrebonne Parish is dealing with an unprecedented situation brought on by a strong Category 4 hurricane," said Parish President Gordon Dove. "Recovery will be slow until critical utilities



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are restored and we do not know when these will be available,” he added. These factors greatly complicate the timing of the decision on reentry into Terrebonne, a decision that will be made by Parish President Dove in conjunction with Terrebonne Sheriff Tim Soignet. Driving their decision will be the safety of parish residents. With no street lights and the abundance of hanging power lines—some stretched low across roadways—travel at night is dangerous. As a result the curfew remains in effort for Terrebonne Parish.

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