

Hurricane Ida's devastation continues to unfold across Louisiana a week after landfall, US death toll rises to 71

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Over the weekend, the Louisiana Department of Health ordered the immediate closure of seven nursing homes that packed their residents into a warehouse last week ahead of Hurricane Ida to ride out the storm. Seven patients died since they were moved, and five of the deaths have been classified as storm-related fatalities, officials said in a statement.

According to a state order prohibiting the return of the patients to the nursing facilities, officials that visited the warehouse “observed conditions that have caused great concern” and “may cause a danger to the public life, health, and safety.” When a team of state health inspectors arrived Tuesday to investigate the warehouse, the nursing homes’ owner demanded they leave immediately.

Health officials reported several people were hospitalized after facing squalid conditions inside the warehouse. Department spokesperson Aly Neel said generators had failed and the warehouse was inundated by stormwater. Officials said people were laying on mattresses on the floor, without food or clean clothes, and a strong odor of feces permeated throughout the building.

The health department reported the patients were evacuated to the warehouse on Friday, August 27, ahead of Ida’s landfall in Louisiana on August 29. State officials learned of the horrid conditions after landfall and found inadequate care for those who needed it the most.

The seven nursing homes are operated by Bob Dean, a commercial developer that owns multiple facilities across Louisiana. According to ABC News, Dean’s nursing homes had received poor federal ratings. Medicare.gov gives six of the seven nursing homes the

lowest possible rating, and five of the locations were penalized for poor “quality of resident care.”

Meanwhile, one week after Ida made landfall, more than 598,000 households in Louisiana were still without power Sunday afternoon, according to PowerOutage.us. Across the state, the utility company Entergy reported 24,308 distribution poles had been damaged or destroyed, 29,084 spans of wire down, and 5,742 failed transformers and 212 transmission structures that had been destroyed by Hurricane Ida.

In New Orleans, the extended power outage, now in its second week, is so unbearable that the city has begun evacuating vulnerable residents to powered shelters in northern Louisiana and Texas. The city began a shuttle bus program Saturday, which picks up people from the city convention center in charter buses.

Hurricane Ida has so far claimed the lives of fourteen people across Louisiana, including four deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Some of the areas in Louisiana that were hit hardest by Hurricane Ida could be without power for several more weeks. Entergy, which provides electric service to more than 1 million customers, estimated that power will be restored to most of its customers by Wednesday, but warned the parishes of Lafourche, Terrebonne, and part of Jefferson may not have electricity until September 29.

A fuel shortage has exacerbated the situation for those who could not or did not evacuate ahead of the storm. Many gas stations do not have power or are out of fuel; those that do have power see people waiting in long lines for hours. People are desperate to fuel their vehicles to leave the region or use their cars’ air

conditioning to escape the sweltering heat. Others need gas to keep their generators running at home. Police reported a man was shot and killed while confronting a man who cut the line at a gas station in Metairie, just outside New Orleans.

Meanwhile, the US Coast Guard reported Saturday it was responding to a sizable oil spill, which is ongoing, in the Gulf of Mexico. The spill is leaking from a source underwater at an offshore drilling rig two miles south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana where Ida made its landfall. The Associated Press initially published aerial photos of a miles-long brown and black oil slick on Wednesday.

The spill is still growing and appears to be spreading out to sea. Officials do not have an estimate for how much oil was in the water, but the AP reported that satellite images appeared to show the oil slick drifting more than a dozen miles eastward along the Gulf Coast. The publication of photos of the spill prompted the Environmental Protection Agency to begin flying a specially outfitted survey aircraft over industrial sites hardest hit by the storm.

The current death toll from Ida stands at 71 with 51 people reported dead in the northeastern US after the hurricane's powerful remnants brought record rainfall, devastating floods, and tornadoes to the region.

Wednesday night was the first time the National Weather Service issued a flash flood emergency for New York City. The city's entire subway system was shut down overnight. Water flooded numerous stations and even got into trains filled with passengers. Flood waters rushed into basement apartments in Queens, killing 10 people, including Ang Lama, Mingma Sherpa and their two-year-old son Lobsang Ang. In Westchester County, one person died after being caught in a flash flood and attempting to flee their car. That person's spouse, who was with them at the time, is now missing.

Rescue teams spent hours Wednesday using boats to reach people stranded by floodwaters in Pennsylvania. At least one tornado rolled through the southern part of New Jersey, ripping the sides off some homes, and turning others into rubble. The death toll in that state has risen to 27, and four people are still missing.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, officials said 19-year-old Melkin Cedillo drowned as storm waters quickly flooded his apartment complex. About 50 other

apartments were flooded and 150 residents were displaced.



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