

IASM Members Chosen for Gulf Coast Pilot Stabilization Program

Commended for 'making a difference'

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the Louisiana/Mississippi border as a category 4 Hurricane with winds in excess of 145 mph. In the coastal region of Mississippi, a storm surge as high as 35-feet created a zone of destruction covering over 70 miles of coastline. Wind damage extended far into the interior, and there were eleven confirmed tornados.

The physical damage in Mississippi is far beyond what has been reported in the media. Many areas were completely obliterated, including the complete destruction of more than 65,000 homes and hundreds of commercial buildings. The conditions are almost impossible to communicate in words or with a few photos. The structural damage is extreme, having more in common with earthquake or blast damage than with most hurricanes in modern memory.

In an unsolicited e-mail to IASM, Patrick Sparks, President of Sparks Engineering, Inc., in Round Rock, Texas wrote: "You should know that structural movers are making a difference in the recovery after (Hurricane) Katrina on the Mississippi coast."

Sparks said he had been working with Jimmy Hays of Hays Brother House Moving and John Williams of Kosciusko House Movers, both of whom are members of IASM.

"As a structural engineer on the coast right after the storm, I saw immediately that to save buildings devastated by the storm surge, many of which were

(Above and right) IASM members Hays Brothers and Kosciusko House Movers, both of Mississippi, doing reclamation work on a large two-story Victorian structure built in 1905 that was flooded and knocked from its piling supports at Biloxi Beach. The house is owned by Chevix Swetman, president and CEO, People's Bank, Biloxi, MS. Mr. Swetman was unaware the structure could be saved by structural movers.



displace off their foundations, we would need structural movers," he wrote. "These guys are doing a great job".

"Structural movers have the skills needed to respond to the physical damage caused by this type of event. I recognized that immediately. As an engineer, I can evaluate the building's structural stability and devise a stabilization scheme, but I can't actually do anything. Ultimately, it is the availability of a competent contractor that makes the project a success. Most contractors are naturally unfamiliar with this type of extreme damage and don't know how buildings behave when they have lost a large part of their support. Structural movers, on the other hand, have the experience, skill, and equipment to brace, lift, and stabilize a severely damaged structure."

"The challenges are many: Logistics: -1) no place to stay, 2) difficult access because of debris, 3) tough working conditions, 4) few services (food, tools, materials), 5) communications, etc. All are very difficult. Also, the people of the area are devastated...they have in many cases lost everything. So often the building, or what is left of it, is the only thing they have, and they are not sure if it can be saved, or if they can afford to save it. So giving people advice on what is feasible and what is not is an important thing right away, so they can mentally process the information in making decisions."

To read the rest of this story and other articles in this issue of Structural Mover, contact IASM for information on Membership. Structural Mover is published by IASM for members. As a member you receive all issues of Structural Mover.

Photographs: Courtesy of David Preziosi, MHT and Patrick Sparks, SEI.

