



# KATRINA TAKES AIM

## AN EXTREME STORM

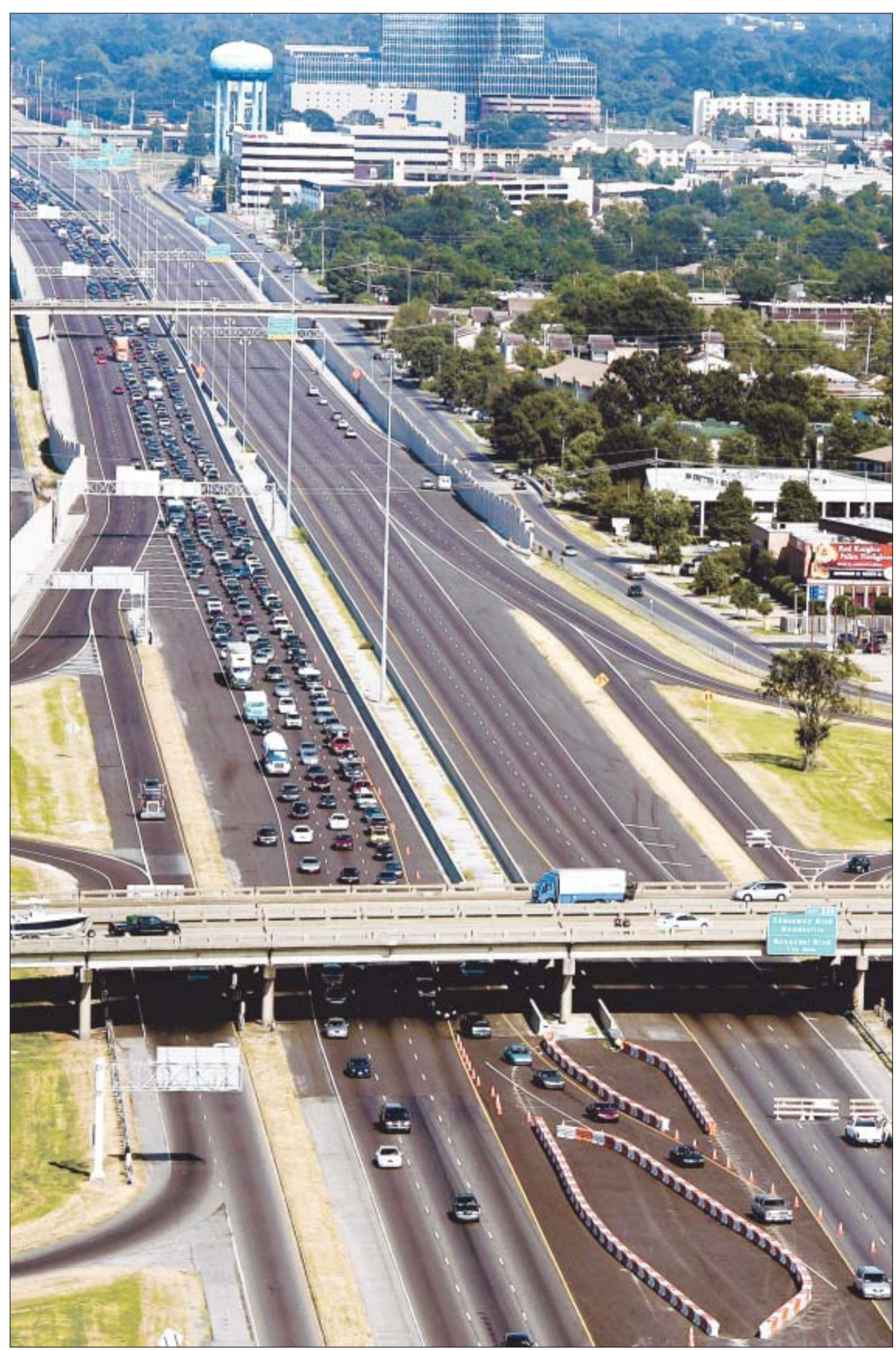
Monday landfall likely as strong Category 4

## GET ON THE ROAD

Officials strongly urging residents to leave area

## WALL OF WATER

Levees could be topped in the entire metro area



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX BRANDON

By Bruce Nolan  
Staff writer

More than a million people were jolted out of their weekend routines and spent a tense, hot Saturday preparing for a surprising Hurricane Katrina, which curved unexpectedly toward the low-lying city and is expected to make landfall Monday morning.

Katrina was expected to approach the area as a Category 4 storm, with winds of 145 mph, and it could build to a top-of-the-chart Category 5 storm, with winds of 155 mph or higher, National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield said Saturday afternoon.

Tracking westward Saturday after crossing south Florida on Thursday, the storm began a turn toward the north and intensified, fed by the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The storm seemed to pose the most serious threat of a direct hit to the area since 1998, when Hurricane Georges barreled toward metropolitan New Orleans before veering at the last moment to Ocean Springs, Miss., with winds of 105 mph.

Walter Maestri, Jefferson Parish's emergency management director, gauged the threat in terms that chilled New Orleanians old enough to remember the summers of 1965 and 1969: Katrina was following Hurricane Betsy's track, he said, with the strength of Hurricane Camille.

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## Katrina bulks up to become a perfect storm

By Mark Schiefstein  
Staff writer

Katrina could turn out to be the perfect hurricane, much to the dismay of south Louisiana residents.

Not only is there little to keep it from strengthening on a dangerous scale, but it is expected to create a dome of storm surge that could flood much of eastern New Orleans, the 9th Ward and Mid-City in New Orleans, swamp much of the West Bank and Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes, and flood north shore areas.

"I don't remember seeing conditions as favorable as this for a strengthening hurricane for a long time," National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield said Saturday.

He was referring to a unique combination of physical and meteorological conditions that are expected to cause Katrina to spin up to Category 4 or 5 strength, like a top accelerates when you pull its string.

See **STORM**, A-23

Westbound drivers veer into the normally eastbound lanes of Interstate 10 at Clearview Boulevard on Saturday as the state's redesigned contraflow plan gets its first workout. State Police activated the plan about 4 p.m.

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**INCREASING STORMS**  
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