



PRESS RELEASE

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

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Banks Opening More Branches in Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina, Helping Communities Rebuild

Powell, Local Officials Tour a Branch with 6 Banks under One Roof in Jefferson Parish

Banks have resumed operations and are working to open even more branches to help serve both customers and non-customers in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. As of yesterday, all the 280 FDIC-insured banks in the hurricane-affected area were operating, with 93 percent or 4,693 of the 5,054 bank and savings institution branches open for business. Since the storm struck, 33 temporary locations have been opened in the 3 state-area.

FDIC Chairman Donald Powell today toured a branch of Omni Bank in Jefferson Parish, accompanied by Louisiana Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard, Louisiana Banking Commissioner John Ducrest, Louisiana Banking Association CEO Peter Gwaltney, Community Bankers Association President Dan Digby and other state and local bankers. Omni is one of 13 bank branches now open in the New Orleans area that are operating jointly -- under one roof with as many as six competitors -- in an effort to best serve the community in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This Omni branch is hosting Crescent Bank & Trust, Iberia Bank, Mississippi River Bank, United Bank and Regions Bank -- all under its Westbank branch auspices.

Although Katrina created a tough operating environment that affected critical infrastructure, now that power and telecommunication are being restored, banks are operating at an even greater capability to meet the emerging needs of customers as they return to their communities and assess their lives and livelihoods.

"The re-opening of branches is a significant step in helping the area to rebound and rebuild, and I am confident that more branches will be opening soon," said FDIC Chairman Don Powell. "I was very moved to see all these banks cooperating with one



Congress created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in 1933 to restore public confidence in the nation's banking system. It promotes the safety and soundness of these institutions by identifying, monitoring and addressing risks to which they are exposed. The FDIC receives no federal tax dollars -- insured financial institutions fund its operations.

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another and working out of the same branch for the greater good to help those affected by this great tragedy," Powell added. "It's like having competitors such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs set up a computer company together under one roof. But bankers are at the forefront of their community and they will do what needs to be done to get their neighbors and customers back on their feet. Bankers will be the foundation for rebuilding these hard-hit communities by providing loans and other services to businesses and consumers. Local banks were fortunately in strong financial condition and well managed when this disaster struck, and they are in position to be key institutions in the rebuilding effort."

Powell reiterated that consumers should rest assured that their money is safe. "The FDIC's message to the public is very clear. First, don't be concerned about the safety of your insured deposits – they're perfectly safe just where they are in federally insured accounts. Second, if you do need access to your deposits, you can access them by check, debit card, ATM and now at even more branches."

Powell noted that the FDIC is aware of difficulties some customers have had reaching their bank due to telecommunications problems but added that dramatic improvement has been occurring daily and asked that customers be patient as bank staff work diligently to answer phones and address customer concerns as best they can.

When Katrina hit, the FDIC acted quickly to restore consumer confidence in the banking system by working with banks to help them resume operations and with consumers to provide accurate information about their banks and how they could get needed cash. The FDIC and other bank regulators encouraged banks to help hurricane victims by waiving ATM fees for customers and non-customers; increasing ATM daily cash withdrawal limits; easing restrictions on cashing out-of-state and non-customer checks; waiving overdraft fees as a result of paycheck interruption; allowing loan customers to defer or skip some payments; and waiving late fees for credit card and other loan balances due to interruption of mail.

The FDIC has also reminded consumers to protect their Social Security, bank and credit card numbers and other personal information, especially in response to unsolicited requests from strangers. Fraudsters may try to take advantage of the crisis by tricking victims into divulging personal information.

Consumers with questions about accessing bank accounts, lost records, ATM cards, direct deposit or how to reach their bank can contact the FDIC toll-free at 1-877-ASK-FDIC (1-877-275-3342). The hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To date, the call center has received 5,200 calls from consumers and the special Web page for people affected by Katrina -- www.fdic.gov/katrina -- has received more than 67,000 visits since the page was launched on September 1.