



News Release

Galveston District

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



2000 Fort Point Road
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

409) 766-3004
swgpao@usace.army.mil

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Galveston District employees endure Hurricane Ike

Loretta Buddenhagen remembers most the Beanie Babies, several hundred of them that she had collected over the years for her daughter Jillian, now 19. The stuffed toys were kept in her home in “Fish Village” on Galveston Island. When the waters from Galveston Bay pushed inland, the 5 feet of bay water that rushed into her home claimed almost all of the Beanie Babies, along with most of her possessions and chunks of her home.

Buddenhagen, a Program Analyst in the Programs and Project Management Division of the Galveston District, is one of about 45 district employees—most living on the island—who sustained major damage during Hurricane Ike. Employees reported flood waters, buckled floors, wet carpets, mold, wet sheetrock, missing shingles—you name it. John Machol, a policy analyst in the Regulatory branch, lost 12 guitars to the floodwaters, and much of his furniture and clothing. Gus Marinos, the Emergency Management chief, lost priceless antique collections. Trish Brannan, a project assistant in Engineering and Construction, found out that her home was uninhabitable and the contents covered with sludge. Kenny and Cheryl Jaynes lost their motorcycles and many, many other possessions.

Many of them, like Marinos, Buddenhagen, Brannan and the Jaynes, continued to work round the clock, pulling duty in the Alternate Emergency Operations Center at Addicks or other alternate locations while trying to deal with the damage to their homes.

In Buddenhagen’s case, her home had to be virtually gutted. Carpet, flooring, sheetrock all had to come out. Because of the way the home was constructed, the water and mold actually moved up the walls in some rooms, rendering the rooms just frames.

“Everyone worried about the seawall [on the Gulf of Mexico side of the island], but we were attacked by the bay,” she said. “I was here during Hurricane Alicia, and it was no big deal. This has been pretty bad.”

She and many of the other employees living on the island are known as BOI—born on the island. They have lived their lives on the island, enduring tropical storms and the occasional hurricane, and have no intention of leaving.

“Some people say we are crazy for living here,” she said. “But where do you go? This is my home. Anywhere you live, there is something: earthquakes, tornadoes, blizzards—I plan to stay right here.”



Loretta Buddenhagen and her husband George look over their home in “Fish Village” as they determine what repairs need to be made.

Right now, she and her husband George and their two dogs and cat are staying with her mother in Galveston.

“We are fortunate to have a place to stay,” she said. “Many people in our situation are living in the shelter tents in town. My ‘pity party’ is over. Most of what we lost was just things, and they can be replaced in time. We believe in counting our blessings.”

Still, the pain on her face was visible as she looked at a few family photos that had somehow managed to survive. They were photos of the young daughter Jillian, back when she collected the Beanie Babies.



Loretta Buddenhagen, Program Analyst with the Galveston District, holds some of the few lifetime memories that are not lost when Hurricane Ike flood waters filled her home in Galveston.