



# R.J. Corman Crews Return To The Gulf After Hurricanes Gustav & Ike Hit.



In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast as a Category 3 Hurricane. It was the costliest (\$81.2 billion) as well as the fifth deadliest, in the history of the United States. It caused severe destruction along the Gulf coast much of it due to the massive storm surge that decimated the Mississippi Coast.

R. J. Corman's Storm Team crews embarked immediately on the largest scale clean-up and reconstruction project to date. Crews of hundreds spent approximately 6 months removing debris, re-railing submerged cars, replacing washed out roadbeds and re-laying 40 miles of track for CSX.

Because of our crew's speed and tremendous efforts during the Katrina clean-up and re-build, three years later, R. J. Corman Storm Team crews were called upon again to return to the Gulf awaiting Hurricane Gustav & Ike.

Storm Team projects require more than just equipment and man-power. It requires logistics, infrastructure and countless hours of administrative and mechanical support. That is why a temporary shop facility was set up close by. According to Justin Cheatham, Field Administrator for Construction, there was over 200 pieces of equipment on-site, which changed daily. CSX's Project Coordinator, Fred Haddix commented on the importance of having the shop, "R. J. Corman's full-service mechanical shop keeps everything running smoothly and on-time. They use all their resources."

Everything was in place when Hurricane Gustav hit the coast of Mississippi on September 1st as a strong Category 2. Unlike Katrina, Gustav did not have the same devastating storm surge. However, Gustav did damage some of the same track that our crews re-laid after Katrina.

Our crews moved in immediately, but were soon evacuated because of Hurricane Ike with

the exception of our paint crew. Stonewall Craft and his crew (see page 6) stayed behind to paint and decal a new piece of equipment. Ike was projected to make landfall as a Category 3 hurricane or higher, but it shifted and made it's landfall on September 11th in Baytown, Texas as a Category 2 hurricane.

Hurricane Ike did leave its mark on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It further increased the damage caused by Gustav. After two weeks and two hurricanes, our crews finally began to clear the debris. Then two crews began the task of rebuilding the road bed. They worked in tandem on each end of the 20 mile stretch working toward the middle. A 20+ year veteran of Construction, Eugene Masters commented, "This type of work can sometimes be more challenging than new construction." Operators had to offset the existing track to build the road bed back to grade then move the track back into position. Our crews commented that the Hurricane Katrina project helped them with this clean-up. Wayne Durbin reported, "We learned a lot from Katrina, this time we knew to reach out 80 ft or more to retrieve the ballast" (see top photo to the left). Once the road bed was rebuilt the R. J. Corman crews began re-aligning and repairing the track.

Experience and quality work are not the only reasons the R. J. Corman Storm Team was called upon. Another was speed, by combining the efforts of our skilled crews we work more productively and efficiently. The "Corman Way" is another reason. It is the "all hands on deck, do what you have to do to get the job done right and safely" mentality that further sets us apart. Our equipment is another asset. To be the best you have to use the best equipment and here at R. J. Corman we take great pride in not only looking good, but having the best equipment for the job. Our shop can fabricate the parts needed to make a piece of equipment fit the railroad industry's specific needs.

It's important to remember that here at R. J. Corman there are hundreds of "behind the scene" man hours that go into the successful completion of a Storm Team Project. Whether it's a pilot shuttling crews, a parts manager stocking a mechanical trailer, a laborer cleaning debris, an administrative person tracking hours or an equipment operator moving ballast, everyone plays an important role.

Congratulations to all the men and women that helped make yet another Hurricane Response a success!

