



New Orleans, Louisiana

Address

7520 Hayne Blvd
New Orleans, LA 70126

Telephone/E-Mail

Office (504)309-9406
Fax (504)309-9423
neworleans@mds.mennonite.net

Directions

From the West – I-10 to I-610 and then back to I-10 to exit 242 – Crowder Blvd. Turn north on Crowder Blvd.

From the East – I-10 to exit 242 – Crowder Blvd. Turn north on Crowder Blvd. Turn left (West) on Hayne Blvd. to 7520 Hayne Blvd. MDS is located on the Corner of Hayne & Mayo.

Location

The city of New Orleans is surrounded almost entirely by water in eastern Louisiana. Lake Pontchartrain is located to the north with the Gulf of Mexico lying to the east and south.

Demographics

New Orleans was founded in 1718 by the French and was named after Philippe II, Duc d'Orleans, the Regent of France. The site was selected because it was a rare bit of natural high ground along the flood-prone banks of the lower Mississippi River. Prior to the French arriving, Native Americans settled on the ground rich in water resources and close to trade routes. With the city rapidly growing, a drainage system was devised so that the city could expand into low lying areas. The 20th century brought rapid growth to the city and left many areas several feet below sea level.

New Orleans' population was approximately 450,000 before Katrina hit. Since Katrina, estimates suggest 90% of residents have returned to New Orleans, however only about 25% of residents have returned to the Ninth Ward.

Hurricane Katrina

New Orleans was damaged not so much by the wind and rain of Hurricane Katrina which made landfall on August 29, 2005, but by the failure of the levees surrounding the city. As the hurricane passed through the Gulf Coast region, the levee system failed and 80% of the city was flooded. Over 1,500 people died in Louisiana. A few weeks after Katrina wreaked havoc on the city, the lower Ninth Ward was flooded again by Hurricane Rita's storm surge. Today, thousands of homes still sit empty.

MDS

MDS purchased property in New Orleans in 2006 to facilitate a long-term recovery response in the greater New Orleans area. The camp consists of a large building that accommodates sleeping, bath, kitchen, dining and tool storage facilities. MDS partners with various agencies that provide funding for building materials and casework to identify those most in need.

Contaminated drywall (sheetrock) that emits hydrogen sulfide gas has become a secondary disaster in New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina, organizations and individuals took advantage of drywall offered free of charge for rebuilding homes. The drywall was made in China. Knowing that there had been problems associated with other drywall made in China, MDS checked and was assured by letter that the drywall had been tested and did not emit the problematic gasses.

However, it has become clear that much of this free drywall was in fact contaminated, and is affecting the homes where it was installed. Exposed copper wires and pipe are corroded. A/C condensers have failed. Occupants are anxious about the effects on their health.

MDS has agreed that we will repair three homes that contain contaminated drywall installed by MDS. To make these homes safe and secure again, the contaminated drywall, electrical wiring, receptacles, affected insulation and copper plumbing will be removed. HVAC systems, carpeting, light fixtures, and appliances may need to be replaced.

It can feel disheartening to repair something twice, but imagine if this is your home and you face being displaced a second time – once because of Katrina and again because of contaminated drywall. We can make it right for these homeowners, giving them renewed hope and putting them into a safe and secure home. MDS volunteers will be working on these homes and other Katrina-related jobs this coming fall and winter.