



BRAC's preliminary analysis of potential magnitude of flooding's impact on the Baton Rouge region

It should be noted from the outset of any analysis of the potential impacts from Louisiana's 2016 flooding that began to strike South Louisiana one week ago – on Friday, August 12 – that this disaster is still unfolding like a slow-moving freight train. Homes and businesses are still being hit by new flooding in lower southwest Louisiana and Ascension, St. John, and St. James parishes.

As Louisiana slowly turns its attention from response to recovery, it is not too soon to start assessing the potential magnitude of the flood's impact. It's the hope of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber that by analyzing initial available data, greater awareness of the potential impact on the people and property that the data represent will only grow, as will the magnitude of the flood itself.

20 parishes in Louisiana have received federal disaster area declarations so far. BRAC, as the lead economic development organization for the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), focused its preliminary analysis on only the nine parishes in Louisiana's Capital Region – all but one of which (West Baton Rouge) have been included in federal disaster declarations. As such, this analysis offers insights into potential impacts within the state's Capital Region alone, and but a perspective on a portion of the impacts to the state as a whole.

To perform this analysis, BRAC used geographic information system (GIS) data provided by LSU's Stephenson Disaster Management Institute (SDMI - www.sdmi.lsu.edu) that outlined areas that were identified as affected by the flood within the nine parishes. SDMI has been working on disaster GIS mapping and analysis with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). These sources allowed BRAC to identify housing and business data for the affected areas, and quantify the homes and businesses that were at risk throughout the nine-parish region.

However, it's also important to make clear what this analysis does not show: For one, it does not calculate the dollar value of property damages, as that is a process that will take combined reporting from insurers and numerous federal agencies over time. For instance, while the \$20.7 billion figure cited in the analysis is a staggering amount, it simply represents the total estimated value of residential homes that were subject to flooding, not the damage amount itself, which will certainly be lower. However, the residential housing figure also does not include any estimates on the value of the contents of those homes, which will be substantial, nor the value of automobiles or other personal items potentially lost to the floods.

It should also be noted that the number of homes and businesses cited in the analysis are not yet complete estimates. As noted above, the flooding continues, and in some cases the reporting on impacted areas, on a parish-by-parish basis, was done earlier in the event than could capture the full extent of the flood. For Ascension Parish, where conditions have continued to change throughout the

week, the analysis uses estimates based on the 100-year floodplain, which is not reflective of the actual larger impact.

Relatedly, while this analysis and previous reporting elsewhere shows that a relatively small percentage of homeowners in the region were covered by flood insurance, it is important to keep in mind the almost unprecedented reach of water that in some areas has been described as a 1,000-year flood. It should be noted that the data on flood insurance policies included in our analysis represent parish-area data, rather than flood insurance policies held by the owners of homes and businesses within the areas that experienced flooding.

BRAC believes that this preliminary analysis begins to paint the compelling picture of the human toll inflicted by the flood, the magnitude of the impact it has already had on people where they live and work, and the potential challenges they face in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Analysis Highlights

BRAC is releasing a detailed spreadsheet of data from its analysis. The data analysis includes the nine parishes (counties) that comprise the Baton Rouge/Capital Region – Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana. The Capital Region’s flood impact area covers more than 1,000 square miles.

Below are highlights covering potential residential and business impact for the region as a whole, as well as those for the largest parish in the region (East Baton Rouge) and the parish most impacted (Livingston).

Baton Rouge region residences

- 31% of homes within the nine parishes are located in areas identified as receiving flooding.
- More than 110,000 homes are located in flood areas.
- As a whole, the estimated total value of those homes located in areas identified as flooded is \$20.7 billion.
- 280,910 Baton Rouge MSA residents live in areas identified as receiving flooding.
- 66% of the homes in flood areas were owner-occupied, 22% were renters; 9% were vacant.
- As a region, a maximum of 15% of all homes – not solely in the flood-impact areas – were insured against flooding.

Baton Rouge region businesses

- Overall, 7,364 businesses employing 73,907 individuals are located in areas identified as flood-affected. These represent 21% of businesses in the overall Capital Region, and these specific locations employ 18% of area employees.
- Proportionally, businesses in Livingston experienced the most severe impact with 3,305 businesses that employ 27,653 employees in the areas of flood-impact, representing 91% of businesses and 94% of employees.
- 2,055 businesses were located within the impacted area of East Baton Rouge, employing 22,298 people, representing 9.1% of businesses and 7.7% of employees at those businesses.

- Other parishes with high percentages of affected businesses include Ascension, East Feliciana and St. Helena.
- Within the region, the hardest hit industries are retail (1,126 businesses with 12,107 employees), construction (756; 6,873), healthcare (487; 9,350), manufacturing (239; 4,966), and food services/drinking places (386; 5,223).

East Baton Rouge Parish only

- 82,573 residents live within the areas that experienced flooding.
- 32,857 housing units are located within the area that experienced flooding, representing 16.9% of the housing in the parish.
 - 60.9% of these were owner-occupied, 31.4% were renter occupied, 12.8% were vacant.
 - 74.6% of these housing units carry mortgages.
- The effects of the flood in East Baton Rouge were borne across racial lines – 47.6% of those living in the impacted area are black residents, while 46.5% are white.
- The total value of the homes within affected areas was approximately \$5.7 billion.

Livingston Parish only

- 125,113 Livingston residents were in flood-affected areas.
- 48,827 housing units in Livingston are located within the area that experienced flooding, representing 86.6% of Livingston homes.
 - 69.6% of these housing units were owner-occupied, 17.2% were renter occupied, 6.2% were vacant.
 - 66.7% of these housing units carry mortgages.
- 12,210 homes, or 21.7% of homes, in the entire parish were covered by flood insurance policies
- More than \$9 billion worth of homes are in flood-affected areas; the combined coverage of all Livingston flood policies, in full force, amounts to less than \$2.5 billion.

#####

This analysis was performed by the Baton Rouge Area Chamber's Economic Competitiveness and Business Intelligence departments, using data from Louisiana State University's Stephenson Disaster Management Institute and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.