

Media Background for Melinda Walsh Great Louisiana Flood of 2016

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Inspiring Stories from the Louisiana Flood

The recent flooding in Louisiana is historic. More than 1/3 of the state's 64 parishes (counties) had widespread flooding. Even the governor's mansion flooded and he had to evacuate. While the disaster is real, it's accompanied by heartwarming stories of neighbors helping neighbors. Melinda Walsh is an author, voiceover artist and marketing consultant who grew up in Baton Rouge. She had to rescue her 85-year-old mother in a borrowed boat, and has 15 other family members affected by the flooding. Walsh can talk about why the locals are counting their blessings. "Politics these days is all about divisiveness," Walsh said. "But the atmosphere after a disaster is about connection and community, bringing people together. The water doesn't discriminate, but touches all equally." She can share inspiring and funny flood stories, explain what you can do to help (hint: chocolate, Facebook posts and gift cards) and offer tips on how to stay resilient in the face of so much loss.

Flood facts: How did this happen?

- Low pressure weather system stalled in place and dumped massive amounts of rain over a short period of time, quickly overwhelming natural drainage pathways.
- As much as 31.39" of rain fell in some places in three days. That's more than LA got from Jan 2012-August 2016. As much as 3" per hour were recorded.
- 20 of 64 parishes (counties) flooded. The Louisiana Governor, John Bel Edwards, had to evacuate the Governor's mansion after the basement flooded.
- 140,000 + homes flooded plus at least that many vehicles
- Amite River crested at 46.2': topping previous record of 41.5 feet. Areas flooded that have never flooded before.

Flood-related topics

Resilience. Disasters compromise your emotional and psychological immune systems. What steps can you take to recover more quickly?

How you can help when you don't know what to do. Many people in unaffected areas feel helpless in the face of disaster events. Here are some things you can do that you may not have thought of—that make a big difference.

Letting Go. Grief is a big part of what happens after a disaster. Here are some practical steps to let go of what was, without letting go of what matters in life.

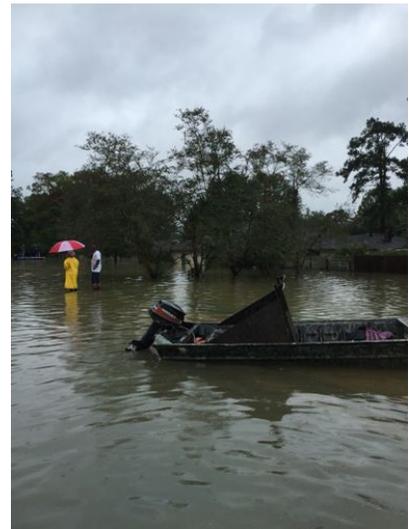
Funny/Heartwarming. Despite the epic nature of a natural disaster, there is still humor to be found, and inspiration that comes from the best of human nature.

Spirit. Baton Rouge had suffered recent tragedies in the weeks leading up to the flood. The shooting of a young black man by a police officer, followed a few weeks later by a disturbed man shooting three law enforcement officers. What to focus upon and be grateful for to help communities heal.

Photos (all credits Melinda Walsh)



August 13, 2016, 9:30AM, Denham Springs, LA.
Mom's house just after we rescued her by borrowed boat.



August 13, 2016, 9:30AM, Denham Springs, LA.
Flooded neighborhood with volunteer boats waiting to be deployed for rescue.



August 13, 2016, 10:05AM, Denham Springs, LA. 1-12 . This is the main road leading into Denham Springs. There is water as far as the eye could see. All buildings for a two mile stretch of road were already flooded. And it was still raining.



August 13, 2016, 10:30AM, Denham Springs, LA. 1-12 heading west. The Amite River has overtopped the raised interstate and has yet to crest. A few tense moments wondering if we would make it before the road became impassable.



August 20, 2016, Denham Springs, LA. Every home had debris piles in front of them, which were made of ruined furnishings and represented lives and memories. It was urgent to empty the houses as soon as possible and remove sheetrock and insulation in order to treat it for black mold prevention. Volunteers came from all over the country to help with this process.